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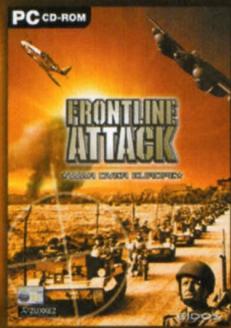
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New Kid On The Block



This month I have been mostly getting excited about mobile gaming. I haven't really paid laptops much lip service over the past couple of years because I assumed that they didn't have what it takes to play the sort of games I like, with the frames-per-second I demand. And if I wanted to play

Solitaire I'd take a pack of cards out with me. But that's all about to change. Mobile gaming is being taken extremely seriously in these parts now, and companies like ATI and NVIDIA are committed to making sure that its graphics chips are going to be available for portables as well as desktop systems. Gaming laptops from different companies were in evidence at the recent ECTS show and we'll be taking a look at some of the best systems money can buy between now and Christmas. Until then, check out the news on page 112.

I say mostly because there's some really exciting news this month that doesn't involve games. At least not directly. Hardworking Aussie (you see, the two words aren't necessarily mutually exclusive) Anthony Holden has been rewarded for his Herculean efforts with a promotion, and we've taken on board a brand new member of staff, Jamie Sefton. Jamie's been writing about games for years and is one of the most respected blokes in the business. You'll be getting to see a lot more of him over the next few issues, when he takes over the Bulletin section, leaving Ant to concentrate on previews and features, but for now I know you'll join me in giving him a really hefty ZONE slap on the back. We love him already, even if he is a Northern-speaking vegetarian Leeds United supporter.

Both Anthony and Jamie have been given the position of Associate Editor, which means that if I slip up there are two of them to stick the knife in. See you next month... Hopefully.

Dave Woods
Editor



COMMAND & CONQUER: GENERALS

P44 The legend returns, bigger, better and badder than ever

COVER DISCS

P134



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Contents differ between the CDs and the DVD. Check the disc pages for more details.

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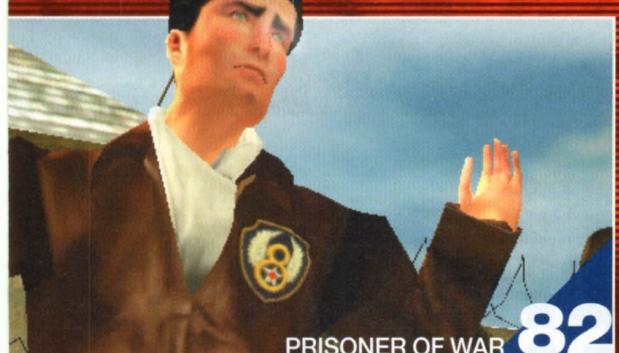
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WIN!

THE COMPO NO ONE FINDS Correctly answer this month's cover question and you could win some PC goodies. Send your entry on a postcard addressed to: The Compo No One Finds (121), PC ZONE, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1T 4JD. The first entry with the correct answer plucked out of the hat wins a mystery prize. The editor's decision is final. Closing date: October 16 2002. The winner of our September cover (119) is Dave Ellis from Farnborough, Hants. Well done, sir.

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SOLDIER OF FORTUNE 2 MULTIPLAYER REVIEW





Prepare thyself...

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER Black Cactus
PUBLISHER Empire Interactive
EXPECTED RELEASE DATE Feb 2003
WEBSITE www.blackcactus.com

IN SUMMARY

The follow up to the superb *Warrior Kings*, *Battles* focuses on skirmishing, something which was sadly lacking from its predecessor. After a century of peace, war is again brewing in the land of Orbis, and it's up to you to restore some order to the chaos. New units and more than 50 unique AI generals will ensure plenty of replayability.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

Warrior Kings came out of nowhere and took the strategy genre by storm with its originality. However, it shipped with many AI glitches and lacked skirmish options. All that is set to be rectified by *Battles*. Yummy, yummy.

WARRIOR KINGS - BATTLES

The true battle is only just beginning

■ **HUMAN COMMANDER:** Martin Korda





The updated *Warrior Kings* engine will mean that *Crusader's* graphics will be truly spectacular.



WHO WANTS A fight then? On *Warrior Kings* that is, not in real life. No that would be way too dangerous. Someone might get hurt if we did that, bruised shins and everything. So a fight then, on *Warrior Kings*? OK, we'll have to play online of course. But wait, what about all that dreadful lag? It'll be almost unplayable. Ahhh, to hell with that idea. Game of slapsies instead?

Just think though, what a jolly old lark it would be if you could play against AI opponents in a skirmish game, or even online with less lag. That would be just clement wouldn't it? Yes it would. But we can't I'm afraid, because *Warrior Kings* went and misplaced its skirmish options before its release. Oh, if only, if only, if only. Well 'If Only' no more, because with *Warrior Kings - Battles*, we'll be able to do just that.

Set a century after *Warrior Kings*, *Battles* sees the peaceful and united land of Orbis once again breaking up into feuding factions. Whereas before you followed a branching story, tackling each mission as it was presented to you, *Battles* will offer you a strategic map packed with 20 regions,

which you must work your way through at your own pace. The storyline (once again penned by the excellent Jamie Thompson) will unfold as you progress and promises to have more twists than a bucket of curly-fries. These factions will be led by one of 50 AI generals, each with their own tactical styles, ranging from impetuous to cautious.

Instead of simply defending and attacking, the AI generals will harness a multitude of strategies, such as sending out scouts to identify your base's weaknesses as well as attempting to capture key strategic areas of the map that they feel will benefit their efforts. In fact, Black Cactus feels so confident about its new AI that it believes many players won't be able to spot the difference between an AI general and a human one. Hmmm, we'll believe it when we see it of course, but it'll be interesting to put this claim to the test in the optimised online games, where up to eight human and AI players will be able to take each other on. And with an intuitive map editor included with the package, there'll be maps aplenty.

Possibly most exciting of all though, is the Valhalla mode, which does away with

"Battles will offer you a strategic map packed with 20 regions, which you must work your way through at your own pace"

base building and allows you to concentrate purely on combat. In a similar vein to *Medieval: Total War*, each side will be given a certain amount of credits to spend on units. The selection will include several new army types such as Tree and Gold Elementals, which can be summoned by Archmages from tree and gold deposits, war elephants that can flatten walls and gunners with bayonettes. After you've made your selection, you'll have to position them on a map before hostilities commence. However, there's a twist to the relentless carnage. As well as wiping out the enemy, you'll also be able to win by capturing a set of key areas on the map and holding them for a set time. Coo, sounds like fun, doesn't it?

From what we've seen of it so far, things are looking extremely promising, and if *Battles* is even half as good as it's threatening to be, it will not only open up the *Warrior Kings* series to the online community, but will cement Black Cactus as one of the world's leading RTS developers. We will, as ever, keep you more posted than a redirected letter. **PCZ**



The Devil inside...

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER Black Element Software
PUBLISHER Cenega
EXPECTED RELEASE DATE 2003
WEBSITE www.shade-game.com

IN SUMMARY

Shade is a third-person action adventure with a supernatural-horror theme. Unearthly beasts and lots of guns will be on offer, but the big deal here is that our hero is possessed by a demon and it's up to you whether you want to let him out to play.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

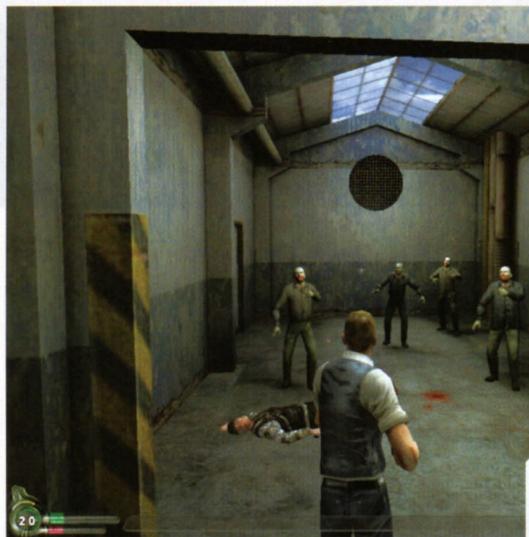
Inspired by *Resident Evil*, the developers of *Shade* are hoping to create a premier horror adventure for the PC at a level console gamers have been enjoying for years. With a top-notch graphics engine and a little help from the developers of *Operation Flashpoint*, it should be an action spooktacular with looks to rival *Max Payne*.

SHADE: WRATH OF ANGELS

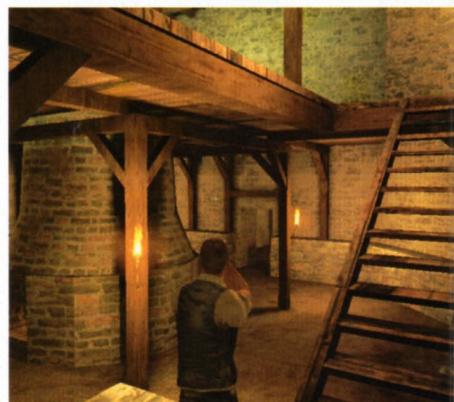
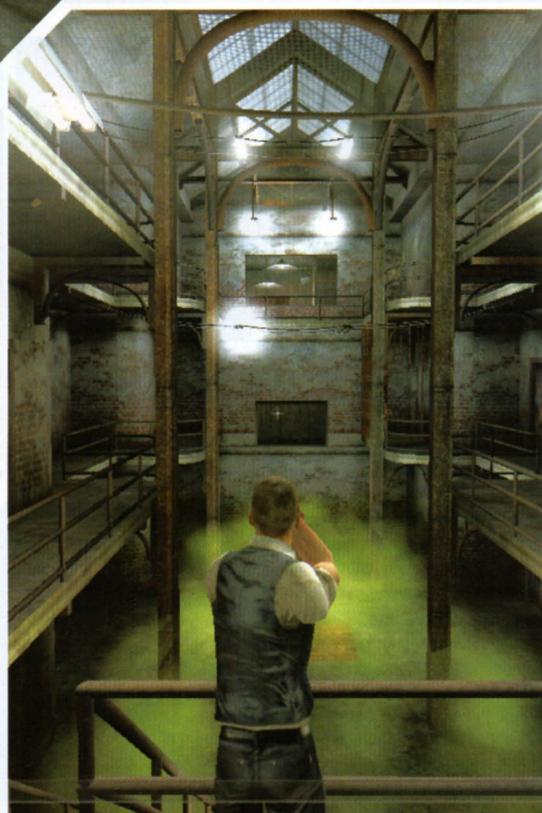
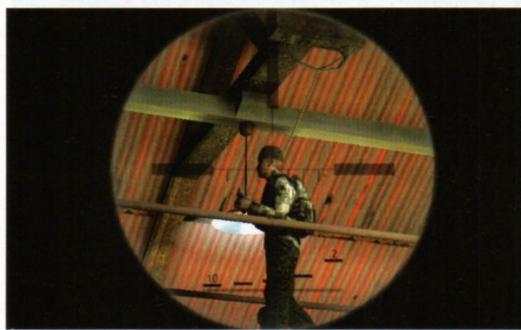
From the same part of the world as Dracula and Vlad The Impaler comes a new name in horror

■ **CZECHING IT OUT** Richie Shoemaker





As far as we can gather, the game describes a Lovecraftian journey into the depths of the earth and, we'd imagine, the depths of terror. Otherworldly creatures and nameless horrors are, of course, obligatory.



IF YOU'VE EVER been to Prague then you'll know it is without question one of the most beautiful cities in Europe, and at time of writing also one of the wettest. Rated on the quality of the beer alone you'd be hard pushed to find a higher quality conurbation.

Equally, Prague has a fine tradition of producing quality PC games: *Hidden & Dangerous*, *Operation Flashpoint* and *Mafia* were all conceived and created in and around the Czech capital, and it is hoped *Shade* will join this shortlist of classic Czech brews.

In development at Black Element Software, literally down the corridor from *Flashpoint* creator Bohemia Interactive (and downstairs from publisher Cenega), *Shade* is a far cry from being an unknown game from an unknown developer. Relative unknowns they may be, but Black Element and its work so impressed Marek Spanel, head of Bohemia, that he bought the company.

"We liked what they were doing and we wanted to help out," says Spanel on the acquisition. "But we have no control over

the game. This is their game. The story, characters, the whole design and development are being done by Black Element. All we're doing is helping out with the technology."

Under construction for a little under a year, *Shade* might be remembered by diligent PC ZONE readers under its previous guise, *Nefandus: Wrath Of Angels*. While the name change had something to do with tedious copyright wranglings, the new branding is only appropriate given the renaissance the game has undergone in other areas. From a gloomy and unremarkable little horror game six months ago, *Shade* has emerged looking technically impressive and assured. The graphics already share much of the variety, mood and detail, not to mention the visual perspective, of *Max Payne*, which is about as high a commendation as a game can get at this early stage.

Of course *Shade* is no simple bad guy-killing spree. Whereas Maxwell Payne had a thirst for vengeance (and, judging by the look on his face,

"Rather than fight to suppress the evil, players are free to unleash the demon whenever they wish"

trapped wind) festering inside of him, the hero of *Shade* has a demon inside, eager to break free.

Rather than fight to suppress the evil, players are free to unleash the demon whenever they wish. However, there is a price; the more often you let your dark side take shape, the less human you become. Solve more of the game's puzzles with your puny human brains or brawn and you might just finish the game without horns.

Despite the fact that we were flown in to Prague especially to see the game, there isn't much else to tell. Though the 3D engine looks impressive, only one level was playable and of the characters that populated it, none had any intelligence beyond that of a Space Invader. It's early days, clearly. On top of that, the story is shrouded in secrecy, special powers and weapons aren't being discussed and the look of the demon exists only in sketchbooks. But at least the weather was nice, the beer more than adequate and the promise of a great game is still intact. Watch this space.





BULLETIN

Gods and monsters

**ECTS
IN FULL
EFFECT**



■ **ASSOCIATE EDITOR** Anthony Holden

▲ If you've been paying any sort of attention lately, you'll know that ECTS happened this month. And anyone who was at the show will recognise the irony in my headline, as the event – Europe's biggest games trade show no less – came and went with more of a whimper than a bang. No new games were announced, many major players stayed away or insisted on staging separate events, and to top it off there was a games convention going on in Leipzig that kept many European developers away.

However, it was still a great chance to catch up with some existing titles, perhaps play them for the first time, and there's no denying that there was some brilliant stuff on display. Just about the entire news section this month is devoted to ECTS and other satellite events, starting with our chat with game guru Peter Molyneux on this very page. Other highlights included Game of Show winner *Splinter Cell* (page 34), PC Game of Show *Breed* (page 14), and, er, *Cutey Fatty* (page 25). Not to forget *UT 2003*, but as we're reviewing that next issue we haven't covered it herein.

In other news, this is the last Bulletin column you'll get out of me, as I'm passing the section into the more than capable hands of our new chum Jamie. New to ZONE he may be, but he's an old games hack from way back, and he's sure to bring plenty of great ideas to the section and put a bit of excitement back into your monthly eyeful of gaming news. As for me, I'll be retreating into the obscurity of the previews section, so you'll be spared my inane editorial ramblings from this moment on.

We catch up with Peter Molyneux and his latest revolution, *Black & White 2*



The new weather effects are absolutely incredible, with proper clouds and everything.

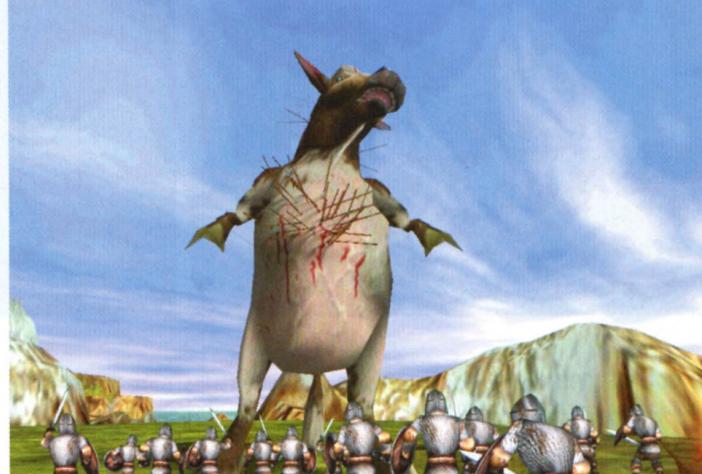


The control interface is being overhauled to make managing large numbers of units a doddle.

YOU MAY HAVE thought *Black & White* was one of the most ambitious titles ever devised but, as we learned when we caught up with Lionhead's Peter Molyneux at the ECTS games show in London, it is mere child's play compared to the sequel.

The biggest difference is that every village in the world is at war with each other. Did we say villages? We meant countries, societies, civilisations. The idea is for each faction to have its own style, from buildings to environment. "The Japanese region should look like Japan, the vegetation and the very nature of the soil should be like Japan," explains Peter.

As ever, in your role as God you will face a choice: will you encourage war and lead your people to bloody, hard-



Your people will no longer stand for violent behaviour from your creature. They'll take a stand and defend themselves.

fought victories, or are you going to strive for peace, using force only in defence as you lovingly nurture your culture and society?

Lionhead's approach to the sequel has very much been to listen to all the people who played the first game and take a critical look itself. "We have a list of 50 things we did wrong in *Black & White*," says Peter, "and of ten things we did right."

Part of the vision is to take the idea of huge battles further than ever before, creating chaotic fights between thousands of units that could make the *Total War* games look small. And, to make things even more spectacular, your creature will get involved in it all.

"War will start with hand-to-hand combat, but it gets really interesting

when they start to develop weapons," says Peter, before showing us an impressive hail of arrows covering the screen, each one landing in a bit of building or ground. The flaming arrows are even better. The people of *Black & White 2* will only develop to a certain stage though, as the further evolution of the world – to medieval or even present-day technology – will be charted through the next three planned instalments in the series.

It's clear that the Lionhead lads are determined to make this a completely revolutionary step forward for games, and they've clearly learnt from their mistakes. This is gonna be huge.

Lionhead • ETA 2003 •
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HOTSHOTS
Splinter Cell in all its shady glory

Doom with a view

id Software shows its wares at QuakeCon 2002

EVERY YEAR, HUNDREDS of id Software fans descend upon a small suburb of Dallas at the peak of the scorching Texan summer, where they cram a convention centre full of high-spec PCs and proceed to play first-person shooters, sweat and eat pizza, all in an apparent attempt to recreate the visions of hell seen in id's famous shooters.

This is QuakeCon, now in its seventh year, and it happened again this August despite heat waves across the nation. As usual, id Software and other developers were there with their latest games, and while no new titles were revealed, it was enough for most to get a closer look at the gob-smackingness of *Doom III*, not to mention *Enemy Territory*, the forthcoming *Return To Castle Wolfenstein* semi-sequel.

Several new details emerged about the content of *Enemy Territory*, specifically to do with changes to the multiplayer game. For a start, you'll now be able to pick up and carry the game's mounted machine guns. While they'll be wildly inaccurate if used on the move, the add-on also adds the ability to go prone, at which point the gun becomes extremely deadly. A new skill system will see your class abilities improving as you use them, to work hand in hand with a new multiplayer campaign mode, and there will be several other new weapons and class features.

However, most people's attention was focused, understandably, on *Doom III*, and all sorts of gameplay specifics came to light in the course of the three-day event. For starters, we've now got a much better picture of the game's weapon set, with confirmation of the pistol, shotgun, BFG and rocket launcher from the original game. The chainsaw is planned, though not yet implemented, and the possibility of a railgun is described as "iffy". Some surprises were also promised.

Another familiar monster was revealed in the form of the Revenant, replete with twin shoulder-mounted rocket launchers, and it was confirmed that we'll enjoy both outdoor Martian levels and a now-requisite journey into hell.



And just think, in another ten year's time this will look like *3D Monster Maze*...

The game's amazing physics were also on full display, with a demo of a fat zombie being shot and rolling, rag-doll fashion, down a flight of steps – though even more impressive was the fallen zombie that was unable to get back on his feet because the marine character was standing on its chest...

If all this isn't enough for you, id also declared that the game would definitely be out in 2003, and possibly as early as May. The only question is, can you wait that long? We'll be sure to keep the drip-feed of info going as long as you hold out...

id Software • www.idsoftware.com



The moody slatted lighting effect is great for creating that '80s video-clip vibe.

Super furry animals

Holy jumping mother o' God in a sidecar with chocolate jimmies and a lobster bib! Sam & Max are back!



GET READY TO celebrate with a slap-up meal at Snuckey's Diner – after nearly a decade, Steve Purcell's wacky Freelance Police duo Sam & Max are returning in a new LucasArts adventure.

LucasArts' 1993 game *Sam & Max Hit the Road* was a very funny point-and-click adventure starring Sam, a dry, philosophy-spouting sadistic dog in a suit, and his

sidekick Max, an insane, nude "hyperkinetic rabbit thing". The duo's manic adventure took a wry look at American culture, with visits to a celebrity vegetable museum and Minnesota's largest ball of twine on the way.

Gameplay details and screenshots are lost in the Mystery Vortex at the moment, but we expect to have more info next issue. We do know that this game has nothing to

do with the abortive *Sam & Max Xbox* title that was in development at Infinite Machine.

With *Full Throttle II* also in the works, LucasArts is obviously keen to resurrect some of its finest adventure franchises. Another *Day Of The Tentacle*, anyone?

LucasArts • ETA 2004 • www.lucasarts.com

Battlefield Earth

The grand designs of *Breed* finally get some recognition



Just driving around destroying trees is entertainment enough in this level.



All our high hopes for this title are suddenly being realised – it's gratifying to see.

ONE OF THE biggest highlights of the recent ECTS games show was the stunning futuristic shooter *Breed*. We've raved about the game's innovative gameplay ideas before – the unique vehicles, the mixture of space combat and squad-based action, the way you can transition seamlessly between Earth orbit and terrestrial battles – but the game is looking better now than we ever imagined. In fact, it scooped the award for Best PC Game at the show, swatting away competition from the likes of *Unreal Tournament 2003* and *Rainbow Six: Raven*

Shield. It's an impressive achievement from a fledgling UK developer with less than a dozen full-time staff, and full respect goes to Brat Designs as a result.

While we were playing the game at ECTS, passing punters continued to compare it to *Halo* – something that has plagued the game from its inception. "It's a purely superficial comparison," reiterated producer Spencer Low. "We've got a similar futuristic setting and loads of vehicular combat, but the scale is different, the tactical focus is different – for a start *Breed* has squad-

based combat that lets you switch between party members, which is more like *Ghost Recon* than *Halo*." We suggested that a better description might be '*Halo* meets *Battlefield 1942*', and Spencer seemed pretty pleased with that. Anyone who's been enjoying 1942's brilliant online game will immediately realise how tasty such an exotic blend could potentially be. Full preview and play/test soon.

Brat Designs • ETA Christmas • www.breedgame.com

The dragon awakes

Charles Cecil unveils new details on *Broken Sword: The Sleeping Dragon*

WHEN THE CREATOR of one of the most popular and successful point-and-click adventure series ever suddenly announces that such games have no future, you have to sit up and take notice.

"The point-and-click adventure is dead," said Charles Cecil, managing director of Revolution, at an ECTS press conference for the launch of the long-awaited conclusion to the *Broken Sword* trilogy. Cecil firmly believes that adventure games are now much better served by a control system that lets players control on-screen characters directly, à la *Tomb Raider*.

As with the previous two games in the series, the wise-cracking American George Stobart and his sexy French photo-journalist girlfriend Nico Collard will feature in a graphically stylish globe-trotting adventure. Dubbed *The Sleeping Dragon*, the new game returns to the story

of the mysterious Knights Templar, an ancient order of warriors who are up to their necks in a conspiracy to harness a mysterious power source.

"This is an adventure with action elements, not an action-adventure," Cecil continued. "The pace is fast and furious, but the gameplay is cerebral rather than relying on huge amounts of manual dexterity."

Cecil was also quite critical of many games developers' push for photo-realistic graphics. He believes this displays a distinct lack of imagination, and *The Sleeping Dragon* opts for a distinctive comic book style instead, with highly expressive characters and detailed facial animation. Watch this space – we'll have a more in-depth preview of the game very soon.

Revolution Software • ETA Q3 2003 • www.revolution.co.uk

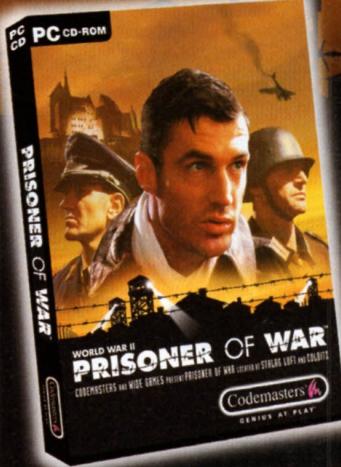


You can climb, run, shimmy and hide – but it's still an adventure game at heart.

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WIN THE WAR FROM WITHIN



PC Gameplay - "The most unique game of 2002"



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As you study the camp's routine, you quickly realise that there's more to this than simply your own survival. In this intense 3rd-person action adventure, you must think your way out of trouble, using your cunning, wits and skill to scheme through your missions and figure out a strategy to defeat the Axis masterplan...



PlayStation®2



www.codemasters.com

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SHORTS

MOUTHFUL OF HONOR



EA took the opportunity of its recent EA Play event to show off more of the forthcoming expansion pack to world-beating shooter *Medal Of Honor*, as well as announcing the official title. The add-on is not to be subtitled *Reload* as we reported last issue, but will be called *Medal Of Honor Allied Assault Spearhead*. We apologise for the error, though you must admit, ours was catchier. No significant new gameplay details emerged at the show, although it was confirmed that a full *Medal Of Honor* sequel is in pre-production.

SID MEIER'S X-COM?



Rumours have emerged regarding the acquisition of the much-loved *X-COM* property by developer Firaxis, home of legendary designer Sid Meier. The classic strategy series has fallen on hard times in recent years (though as far as we know, the pseudo-sequel *UFO: Aftermath* is still in production), and a genuine revival would be excellent news for strategy fans, especially in the hands of one such as Sid Meier. We'll have decisive word on this exciting development next issue.

VAMP IT UP



Not to be confused with the forthcoming Unreal-based shooter of the same name (currently in development at Psyonix), *Vampire Hunter* is a new tactical-action game from German developer Spellbound, creators of *Desperados* and the forthcoming *Robin Hood: The Legend Of Sherwood*. The game follows the same basic *Commandos*-style gameplay of Spellbound's other games, but with the addition of an RPG-style level-up system. It's not due out until the end of next year, so don't get too excited just yet.

Computer love

The latest on *Tron 2.0* – Monolith's FPS upgrade of a cult movie classic



Hero Jet is zapped into the glowing techno world of *Tron 2.0*.



Man U's latest shirt is revealed.

TWENTY YEARS ON, Disney's *Tron* remains one of, if not the best movie ever made about the subject of videogames, and a play of *Tron 2.0* at ECTS reveals an FPS that's definitely worth getting excited about. You play as Jet, the son of the original film's hero Alan Bradley, and have to zap into the newer, deadlier upgraded digital world of *Tron 2.0* to rescue your father from the corrupt fCon corporation.

Your main weapon is the glowing Light Disc from the film, in 35 levels spread across computers, the Internet and even PDAs. Your high-tech frisbee can be thrown at enemies, bounced off walls to hit switches or used as a shield for reflecting plasma weapons back at foes.

Three other kinds of weapons can be nabbed from enemies during the game. These are the Rod, a kind of electronic cattle-prod; the grenade-style Balls and the Mesh, a device which fits onto the hand for laser-blasting and missile-launching. All these

items can also be upgraded via 'subroutines' for more lethal firepower.

However, it's the look of *Tron 2.0* that really mesmerises, with Monolith's new LithTech Triton engine and the original movie's concept designer Syd Mead producing some gorgeous, neon-soaked computer environments.

It's still early days for the game, with no sign of Light Cycles just yet. But as soon as they appear, we'll be banging on Monolith's door for a preview. End of line.



Monolith • ETA Spring 2003 • www.tron20.net

Metalwork

We playtest the latest build of brutal first-person shooter *Chrome*



Bolt Logan spots an ant approaching aggressively from the west.



...8...9...10. Coming, ready or not!

LAST COVERED IN these pages some 11 issues ago, *Chrome* is a gorgeous first-person adventure starring Bolt Logan, a futuristic mercenary framed for a murder he didn't commit. Logan and his partner Carrie flee to a distant planetary system, known as Valkyria, to earn a living bringing to justice the Galaxy's worst criminals. However, the pair are soon drawn into a multinational corporate conspiracy and join in a heroic struggle for the freedom of the universe.

Players take part in 14 missions over seven very different indoor and outdoor

locations, each with their own distinctive vegetation and ecosystems, such as deserts and lush tropical forests. As well as having more than 20 weapons at his disposal, Logan can be augmented in a system that project manager Jan Marek admits is "heavily influenced by *Deus Ex*".

Upgrades include thermo-vision for stealthy operations or transplanted muscles to carry heavy weaponry, perfect for George Bush-style gunboat diplomacy. The freedom to decide your own battle tactics, armoury and character traits are central to Techland's

vision for *Chrome* – you can even change sides during the game to fight for the baddies if you wish.

A range of drivable vehicles will also be available, including jeeps and flying speeder bikes, and these will also be available in the 32-way multiplayer. Yep, *Chrome* is looking mighty fine at this stage, and you can be sure we'll be following its trail of blood until it gets released next year.

Techland • ETA Q1 2003 • www.techland.com.pl

THE ART OF AN ASSASSIN



THE HEADSHOT

Blood type "O" on white ceramic tile.
Specialist equipment: Desert Eagle
Produced in Malaysia 2002.

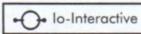
Donated by: Charlie Sidjan

PC CD-ROM

PlayStation®2



HITMAN 2
SILENT ASSASSIN™



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SHORTS**SOLDIER STYLE**

Formerly known as *Natural Resistance*, *Soldiers of Anarchy* is a good-looking RTS currently approaching completion at Silver Style Entertainment (makers of *Gorasul*). Set ten years after a nuclear holocaust, the game puts you in a 3D world where ammunition and vehicles are the currency. The action is said to be a cross between *Dungeon Siege* and *Commandos 2*, with a combination of strategy and basic RPG elements. There's a smallish demo currently doing the rounds, offering a taster of the gameplay, and you can expect a review very soon.

QUAKE ALERT**TREMORS**

If you like your monster movies then you're sure to have seen *Tremors*, an amiable modern-day B-movie about giant worms terrorising US citizens. The sequels might all have dropped straight to video but that hasn't hampered the announcement of the game, currently in development at Rock Solid Studios. Details are sketchy but it's set to be a third-person action-adventure that pits you against the Graboids, and it's aiming for a release in autumn next year.

SIM TITY

Sad men, and occasionally journalists on a jolly, are known to frequent lap-dancing clubs, of which Spearmint Rhino is the worldwide leader. Really sad men, the ones who are so socially inept they can't even interact with women they have to pay, might be interested to hear about *Private Dancer*, an upcoming game that lets you ogle pixelated ladies and gamble from the comfort of your own bedsheet. We await the playable demo with unbridled enthusiasm, although the no-bush rule seems a bit strict.

Use of weapons

Clever shooter *Devastation* quietly continues to impress



Where'd all the love go?



That's for looking at my girlfriend!



You're going to need a plaster on that.

WITH ITS FOCUS firmly on multiplayer action, *Devastation* is a shamefully overlooked Unreal-powered first-person shooter that's determined to invigorate online shooting with its blend of tactical teamplay and clever use of technology.

We spent more quality time with the game at ECTS this year, and while not all of the game's 42 weapons were working, the majority of them were, and it's the most comprehensive, innovative and gratifying arsenal you're likely to see for a long time. Offering everything from pistols and shotguns through to assault rifles, miniguns, railguns, sniper rifles and nailguns, the hardware even includes such devices as 'rat drones' that can be guided into enemy positions and remotely detonated.

However, the variety of killing techniques doesn't stop there, as you can also pick up just about any item in the

environment and use it as a weapon. The smashed bottle is well documented, but how about barrels full of fuel? Pick one up and roll it down an incline towards your foes, then shoot it when it reaches the bottom. (Boom, splat, ouch, etc etc.)

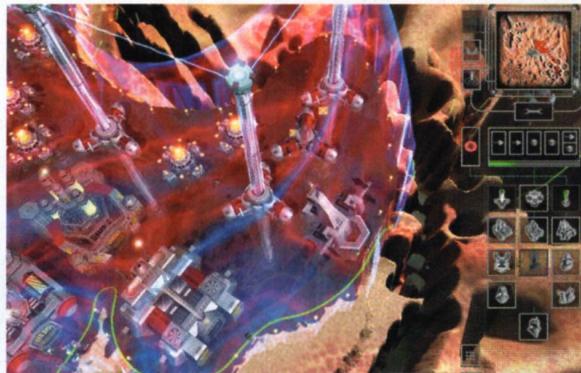
Smarter still is a technique used to protect camping or sniping positions – drag a heavy object across a doorway behind you, so anyone hoping to surprise you will make a loud noise when moving it out of the way. The way forward, clearly.

Provided a few small issues are ironed out before its launch, *Devastation* should be one of the most entertaining and attractive shooters of the next 12 months. More news as we get it.

Digitalo • ETA Christmas • www.digitalo.com

Can you dig it?

Russian RTS *Perimeter* goes to new lengths to level the playing field



Bringing out the landscape gardener in all of us.



It's lost its bright pastel looks in favour of a darker, sci-fi feel.

BILLING ITSELF AS a revolution in RTS gaming, *Perimeter* is a "real-time terraforming strategy" game from Russian developer K-D Lab. It's all about manipulating and managing the terrain, which is both completely deformable and the game's solitary resource. The more land you control, the more energy you have to spend on units and defences, and the more scope you have for tactical terraforming.

Your first priority is to flatten enough land to construct a base, after which you can send armies of scuttling insectoids off

to dig trenches, erect mountains and flatten more building space. Meanwhile, you have to harness energy from the land and relay it throughout your realm, the ultimate aim being to project an impenetrable force field – or perimeter – over your domain. Only when a rival shield comes into contact with your own will your defences be breached, with all manner of ructions ensuing.

You can also use energy to transform your combat units anywhere on the battlefield, changing the nature of your fighting force to meet new strategic

situations. Robotic walkers, missile tanks and mechanical spiders are just some of the unit types you can choose from, automatically organised into squads to alleviate micromanagement headaches.

It's certainly a novel take on the RTS formula, and one that seems simple enough to guarantee tactical depth. Definitely worth keeping an eye on if you're tired of the build-and-rush blueprint.

K-D Lab • ETA Q2 2003 • games.1c.ru/perimeter

THE ARTIST



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www.hitman2.com

SEPTEMBER 2002



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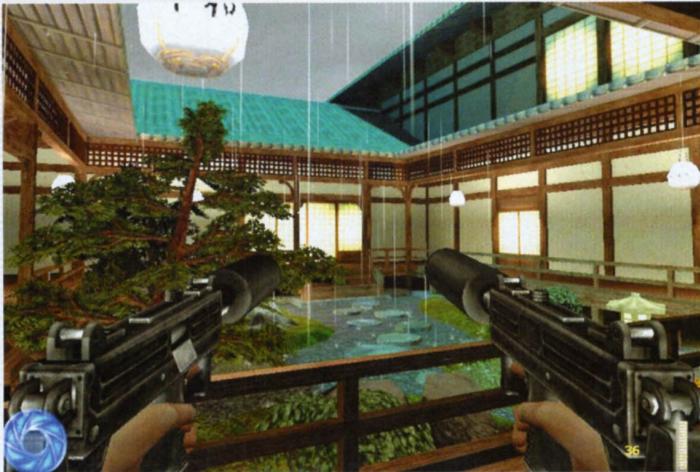
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Eye Spy

Mr Brosnan gets pierced by laser beams in *007 Nightfire*



Show us your bum for ten pence.



Looks like rain again.

EA HAS DISCLOSED further details of its forthcoming James Bond extravaganza at a recent exclusive event. Drawing from a slew of Bond plots, the story involves super-villain Rafael Drake, who is supposedly dismantling and decommissioning nuclear warheads, but is in fact refurbishing them. In a nod to *Moonraker*, he steals a shuttle and takes over a space station.

As already revealed in *PC ZONE*, the game will now feature the face of the current holder of the licence to kill, Pierce Brosnan.

"The quintessential modern Bond is in the game," explained producer John Horsley. "We worked with him on the set. We set up a laser-scanning device that actually captured all the subtle nuances of Pierce's face. He was a total pro; we asked him to smile, raise an eyebrow, look sceptical, look deadly, and he just moved his face around like a puppet. We used the latest laser scan, so he was in and out in 15 minutes."

Having played the gadget-filled shooter at the event, we can confirm a freak resemblance.

However, Horsley admitted: "I don't think he's going to do the voice for us, his schedule is stacked. We have a composite voice right now that's a sort of blend between Roger Moore and Pierce."

Oh well, you can always go and see him in *Die Another Day*, which is in cinemas on the same day, conveniently enough.

Gearbox • ETA November 19 •
www.gearboxsoftware.com

And Y not?

Eye-popping graphics and big insects in *The Y-Project*

LURKING RATHER innocuously on the Nvidia stand at ECTS, *The Y-Project* is actually a far better proposition than its location at the show would suggest. Employing the latest in Unreal technology, *Project* easily ranked among the most visually stunning games at the show.

The action in the game takes place on a distant planet some 200 years hence, with a plot that borrows liberally from *Starship Troopers* and *Total Recall*. According to Westka Interactive's MD Christop Kabelitz, "The hero of the game is a kind of special

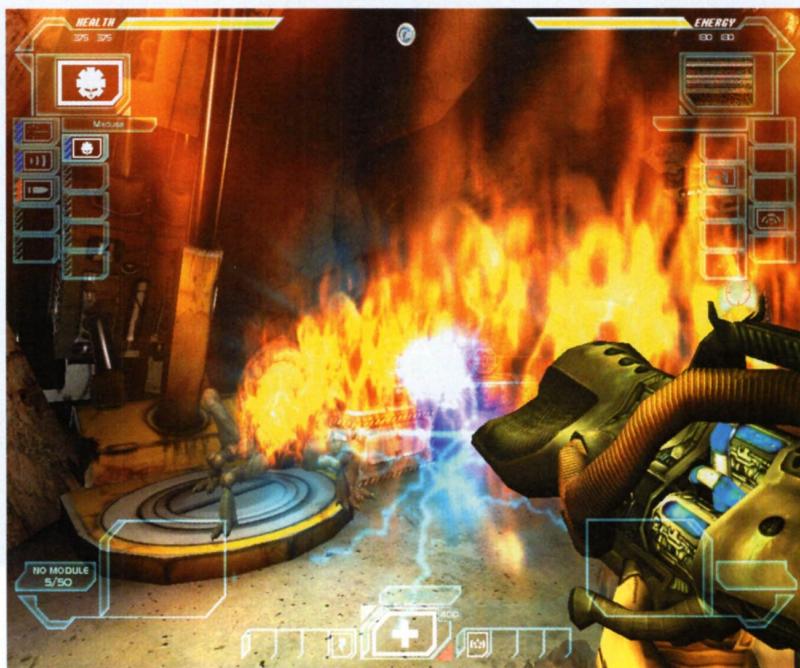
agent and he's trying to free the city from these big mutated insects. The core gameplay feature is that you can play the game on two different sides. One is rather military-oriented and offers lots of action, while the other is rather scientific-oriented with lots of puzzles. You can switch between the sides, and depending what side you are on you will get a different set of weapons."

As well as fighting against either the military or scientific factions in a double agent style, there are a lot of big insects to shoot, as well as spiders, worms and zoidbergs, whatever they are. Once dead, you can collect the insects' DNA, feed it into a nano-assembler machine and create new weapons and tools. With a host of novel gadgets, this looks set to provide a distinctive and colourful FPS experience.



Look at that wasp.

Westka Interactive • ETA Q2 2003 •
www.y-pro.net

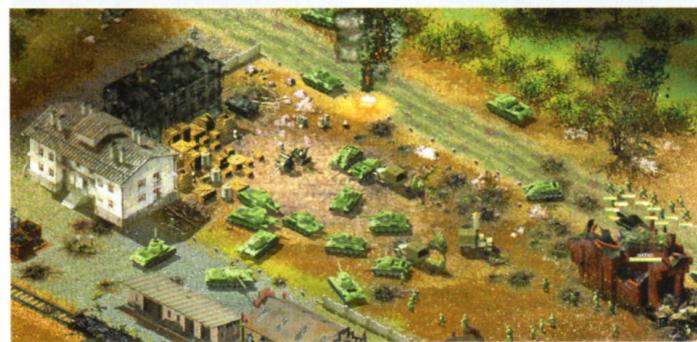


Thank you for not smoking.

COMPETITION

Win one of 20 copies of Sudden Strike II

The RTS sequel's been unleashed and we've got loads to give away!



The classic tank convention was in full swing.

SUDDEN STRIKE took the world by storm when it was released last year and we loved it for its authentic World War II setting and emphasis on action without having to collect minerals to build your soldiers out of.

Unless you've had your head in a helmet for the past few months, you'll appreciate that the sequel's just been unleashed onto an unsuspecting world, sporting five playable nations, more than 50 missions (with the opportunity to make your own

when you've completed them), over 50 new units, controllable boats and a completely reworked multiplayer component – it all makes for quite a nifty RTS package. We enjoyed it thoroughly, and to help spread the joy we've managed to persuade publisher CDV to donate 20 copies to our war chest. If you fancy playing it without paying for it, then just answer the question below, send it to us on a postcard and pray very hard that we pick your name out of the editor's hat before all the copies are gone.

Which ridiculous film starring Ben Affleck and Josh Hartnett recently made a complete mockery of World War II?

A: Nine Lives Of Fritz The Cat

B: Ben Dover – Posh Birds

C: Pearl Harbor

To be in with a chance of winning, simply answer the dead-easy question above and send it on a postcard, along with with all the information requested, to the address below:

■ Please include your name, address, daytime phone number and email address (and age if under 18).
■ Please tell us if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers from companies other than Dennis Publishing Ltd.

■ Please indicate whether or not you are a current subscriber to PC ZONE.

Send your entry to: Sudden Strike II Compo, PC ZONE, 30 Cleveland St, London W1T 4JD.
(Closing date: October 16, 2002)

Terms and conditions: Winners will be notified by post. No cash alternative. Prizes not necessarily as shown. No correspondence will be entered into. The editor's decision is final. All the other usual competition rules, conditions and restrictions apply.

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SHORTS

POLISH PLENTY



As well as the extremely promising *Chrome* (see page 16), Polish developer Techland has a pile of PC stuff waiting in the wings. *Day Of The Mutants* is a post-apocalyptic first-person shooter with *Mad Max*-style driving combat, whereas *Indiana Jack* is a colourful and very blatant *Crash Bandicoot* rip-off. There's also the smart-looking *XP Rally* that could challenge *Colin McRae*'s dominance, motorbike racer *Speedway Grand Prix*, and bizarre sports sim *Pet Soccer*. Visit the website for more info: www.techland.com.pl.

MECH SPEED



The sequel to the mech-fighting PS2 game *Gungriffon Blaze* is coming to PC. In the hands of Japanese developer Game Arts (*Grandia 2*), *Gungriffon: Divide* is a futuristic first-person blaster that allows you to customise your own heavily armed mechs. The storyline centres on a war between advanced and developing nations in the year 2025, while the gameplay features AI wingmen to aid you in battle and network gaming for up to 16 players. There's no UK publishing deal yet, but publisher Kama Digital hopes to have the game in stores by spring 2003.

KOREAN BITS



Several new Korean PC games were on show at ECTS this year, including *Gungriffon: Divide* (above) and *Cutey Fatty* (see page 25), but there were loads of others we didn't have the room to cover. Other new titles approaching from the East include *The Code of Honor* and *Three Kingdoms II*, both anime-style online RTS games from DS Interactive. *The Immortal Duel* is a third-person Chinese-themed 3D hack 'n' slash from CR-Space, and *Universal Commando* is an online-only wargame from Siementech. None have UK publishers just yet, but we'll keep you posted.

Dying for a slash?

Medieval action-adventure *Enclave* hacks onto PC

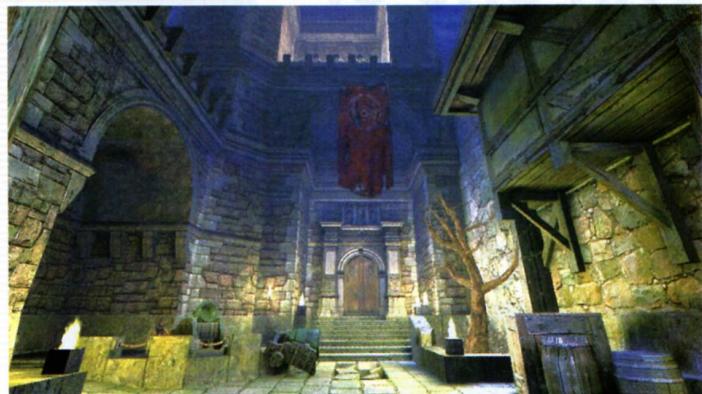
IN A SUMMER of sparse releases, *Enclave* provided a decent nibble of third-person action for starving Xbox owners. Developer Starbreeze is now bringing the sword-slashing epic to PC, promising all the atmosphere and graphical panache of the console version.

Enclave allows you to start the adventure with one of 12 different personalities, including a knight, wizard, berserker and goblin. Each 'Dark' (evil son-of-a-bitch) or 'Light' (goody two-shoes) character has their own distinct weaponry, magical skills and fighting style. Depending on your moral outlook, you join up to fight against or alongside the nasty forces of the hellish demon Vatar in the mythical kingdom of Celenheim.

Easily the most impressive element of *Enclave* is the gorgeous eye-candy. Over 24 levels reveal ancient castles complete with glistening stone walls and slimy dungeons, as well as incredibly detailed cathedrals twisting into the black sky with dark, foreboding, gothic architecture. Character models have realistic expressions, with textured clothing that moves realistically as they sink swords/axes/arrows into enemy flesh.

Gameplay-wise there was some criticism for the Xbox version's enemy AI, which tended to produce rather simplistic mêlée battles, but Starbreeze has at least addressed the annoying lack of a mid-level save-game feature for the PC version.

Starbreeze • ETA December • www.enclave.de



Weapons are plentiful, including huge catapults to pound enemy positions.

Hello Clarice...

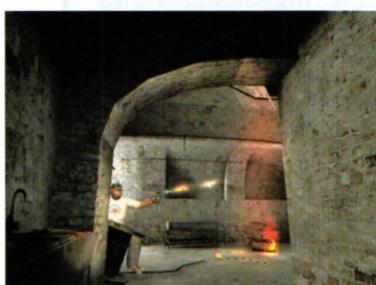
Hannibal Lecter and Clarice lock horns in first-person actioner *Hannibal*



IN THIS WORLD of shrinking resources and skyrocketing populations, the option of cannibalism is fast becoming our only viable way out. The adventures of Hannibal Lecter are a clear attempt by the powers that be to break the stigma of longpig culture and get us ready to chow manflesh, and this agenda is now ready to expand into the realm of interactive entertainment.

Hannibal is a horror-themed action-adventure from French developer Arxel Tribe, and puts you inside the tight-fitting slacks of FBI Agent Clarice Starling. Needless to say she's on a mission to track down America's most wanted killer, reliving plenty of familiar scenes from the films and books along the way.

"We've chosen a first-person perspective for the sake of maximum immersion and fear," explains Arxel Tribe's Diego Zanco. "You'll have to monitor your fear at all times, and if your stress level gets too high, the



music and visuals will start to deform, and you'll start to see your opponents as various kinds of monsters." Which sounds great, but for its remarkable resemblance to the sanity system seen in the forthcoming horror game *Call Of Cthulhu*.

Despite such trickery, *Hannibal* is an action game at heart, though you'll also have to do a bit of investigative work such as collecting evidence for analysis and interrogating witnesses.

Graphically it's not the most convincing game just yet, but it's still in a fairly embryonic state, and there remains potential to do something fun with this licence.

Arxel Tribe • ETA 2003 • www.arxeltribe.com



You'll be encouraged to wound or arrest enemies rather than killing them.

The game uses the Jupiter technology used in *NOLF 2*.

COMPETITION

Win the chance to own Las Vegas...

VIVENDI
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games

20 copies of *Casino Empires* are up for grabs...



CASINO EMPIRE



WE'RE NOT VERY good at gambling. At all. In fact we're rubbish. We're the magazine that thought it would be a good idea to put money on Sandy winning *Big Brother* just before he decided to escape to obscurity. If we bet on a horse, chances are it'll be shot before the sun goes down, and the thought of actually going to Las Vegas, where fruit machines have a slot for your credit card and croupiers encourage you to hand over mortgage deeds positively terrifies us.

Sitting in our undercrackers though, controlling the biggest hotels and casinos on the strip, pumping oxygen up the nostrils of flagging businessmen and breaking the knuckles of card-counters... that's a different prospect altogether. But seeing as there's more chance of us picking the next 25 winners of the Grand National, we're going to have to make do with VU Games' forthcoming *Casino Empire*.

Giving you the opportunity to be a hero without leaving your bedroom, you have to build an empire, keeping an eye on the competition before bringing them down with the sort of brutal tactics that would make Joe Pesci blush.

We'll be reviewing the game next issue but if you can't wait for it to hit the shelves just answer the following question, send your answer to the address below, and if

you're one of the first 20 correct answers out of the hat we'll send you a copy of the game along with a PC ZONE tip for a dead cert. All we ask in return is that you send us half of your winnings. If you want more information on the game check out casinosempire.sierra.com.

WHAT ARE YOUR CHANCES OF WINNING THIS COMPETITION?

- A) Less than zero
- B) Fairly good, as long as I get the answer right
- C) 3/1

Send your answer on a postcard, along with all the information requested, to the address below:

- Please include your name, address, daytime phone number and email address (and age if under 18).
- Please tell us if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers from companies other than Dennis Publishing Ltd.
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(Closing date: October 16 2002)

Terms and conditions: winners will be notified by post. No cash alternative. Prizes not necessarily as shown. No correspondence will be entered into. The editor's decision is final. All the other usual competition rules, conditions and restrictions apply.

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Cossacks: Back To War

Release Date
October 18th

The battle continues....

Features

- Cossacks – Back To War is both a standalone version (does not require a previous version of Cossacks), and an expansion pack
- A total of 20 different European nations to command
- 100 new single player missions
- 4 Levels of difficulty
- 2 new nations: Switzerland and Hungary
- Unique architecture for each new nation, Switzerland and Hungary, with 20 new buildings
- 4 new Swiss units
- 4 new Hungarian units
- New Automated Championship System (ACS) makes the online competition a top event
- Special VIZOR enables watching online GAMES live or as a recording
- New units for Turkey & Algeria: The Bedouin (mounted on camel)
- Extra: Modi with 30 more new units (including coast defence cannon)

Features from the original Cossacks:

- Fascinating 3D landscapes
- Era between the 16th and 18th centuries
- Up to 8000 units on a map
- Spectator Mode
- Orders such as "Guard" and "Patrol"
- Order selection in Pause Mode
- Starting options such as 'Set a Peacetime', 'Start with Army', 'Start without fog of war', 'Start with log cabins' etc.
- 16 times larger maps with different landscapes
- Alliances with computer nations
- Up to 7 players via LAN or online
- Improved AI



The official second
Add-On as a
**Stand-Alone
Version
£19.99**

Xenus envy

It's a rumble in the jungle with role-playing shooter Xenus

FIRST CHROME (page 16), now Xenus – the influence of *Deus Ex* is all too apparent in the latest generation of games. In the works at Russian developer Deep Shadows, Xenus is another 3D blaster that has role-playing and even trading elements within an adventure that we're assured will give the player unprecedented freedom.

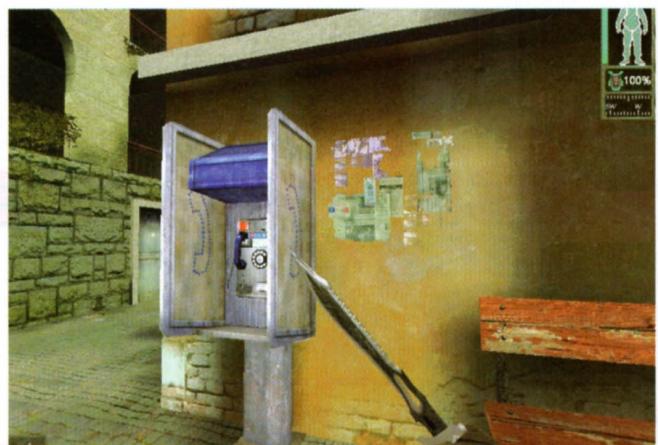
As action hero Kevin Myers you have to rescue your sister, who has gone missing in Colombia. Xenus is set in a violent, tropical jungle environment populated with six different 'sides': mafia, bandits, the CIA, Indians, officials and guerrillas. There are no predetermined enemies when you begin your search, but when you eventually ask one of the groups to help, it changes your relationship with the others.

To find your sister takes both information and 20 types of weaponry, which can be bought with money earned by completing missions. You won't find different levels in Xenus, with the action played out on a huge 25km by 25km battlefield with no boundaries.

To get around you can yomp on foot, or use one of the vehicles strewn about the place, including jeeps, tanks and helicopters.

At the recent ECTS trade show, Sergey Zabaryansky, director of Deep Shadows, was very keen to show off the impressive graphics engine and its individually modelled leaves. However, when we finally got to play the game we were much happier to see highly varied enemy AI, cool vehicle physics, and interaction with NPCs via a *Deus Ex*-style text interface. More news soon.

Deep Shadows • ETA Q3 2003 • www.deep-shadows.com



The last un-vandalised phone in Colombia finally gets its dues...

Your character's skills improve as you use them.

SHORTS

MIDRIFT BATTLES



Midway – Naval Battles. The name sounded promising, but when we hit the website expecting to see a dodgy Japanese Bishoujo game, we actually found pictures of great big boats. Pretty impressive-looking ones admittedly, from a new 3D tactical strategy game set in World War II. It's in development at Mithis Games, and promises "3D action and tactical battles on the surface, in the air and under the sea." Whatever – we still think fighting belly buttons would have been more viable.

PEA SOUPER



By turns action game, adventure and role-player, *Mistmare* is one of a clutch of new games from French developer Axel Tribe. It's set in an alternate 1996 where "there are no cars or mobile phones." What's more, "the world is in turmoil and large parts of the continent are covered in thick mist." Bloody hell. Sounds like it might be the work of a terrible evil that must be defeated by a young sorcerer on a fantastic quest, and you'll be able to check it out firsthand in a demo on next month's cover discs.

DRIBBLER'S DELIGHT



We consistently slag off EA for releasing yearly updates to its sports games, so we really only had ourselves to blame for the lack of an *NBA Live* 2002. Thankfully it's back, in *NBA Live* 2003, with realistic rebounding technology, motion capture with up to four players at once for specific contact situations, enhanced dribbling and more responsive shot blocking. Expect the presentation to be better than ever as well, with enhanced lighting, new crowd animations, real NBA coaches on the sidelines and plenty of authentic NBA arena sounds. It's due out late November.

Built for fun

Korean shooter Cutey Fatty offers a heavy dose of entertainment

NOT EVERY GAME shown at ECTS grabbed our attention for its stunning graphics or brave new gameplay ideas – indeed, some of them appealed just because they were so damn silly. Hardcore sailing sim *Virtual Skipper* and bizarre racer *Spanking Runners* certainly raised a chuckle, but they were overshadowed by a new arcade shooter from Korea, the brilliant *Cutey Fatty*.

Scooping the PC ZONE award for funniest game of the show, and probably the one for most politically dubious as well, *Cutey Fatty*

is billed as a "diet shooting game". It's an old-skool vertically scrolling blaster in the tradition of *Raiden* and *1942*, but instead of a spaceship or fighter jet, you play a fat girl trying to lose weight by shooting down hamburgers and chocolates.

The lass in question is Cutey Fatty, a big-boned girl with aspirations of being a supermodel. The evil Skinny Perky is out to stop her by feeding her lots of fattening foods, which also happen to be Cutey's favourites. A set of scales at the top of the screen

monitors Cutey's weight, and if she hits 100Kg, it's game over.

Along the way you'll also find gym-themed mini-games, giant cookie level bosses and power-ups that allow you to fire sushi rolls or bento boxes rather than your basic pickle.

It's actually a lot of fun, with some clever twists on the formula and plenty of playability, and it should be available very soon. Well, in Korea at least.

Wecom • ETA TBC • www.wecom-arcade.com



Who says computer games aren't confronting youth issues in a meaningful way?



Mini-games require real physical exertion.

IT'S THE 92ND MINUTE. YOU'RE A

GOAL DOWN. YOU ONLY HAVE TEN

MEN LEFT ON THE PITCH. AND

NOTHING BUT RUBBISH ON THE

BENCH. BUT EVERYTHING IS FINE,

THE ONLY MANAGEMENT GAME WITH OFFICIAL CLUB LICENSING, TOTAL CLUB MANAGER FEATURES 42 EUROPEAN LEAGUES AND DIVISIONS, INCLUDING

BECAUSE YESTERDAY THE BOARD

THE FULLY LICENSED FA PREMIER LEAGUE. THE 3D MATCH ENGINE LETS YOU ENJOY THE ACTION, AND MAKE TACTICAL CHANGES, IN REAL-TIME

GAVE YOU A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE.

ON MATCH DAYS. BALANCE THE BOOKS, CHOOSE THE TEAM AND FORMATION, AND LEAD YOUR CLUB TO GLORY. FAIL, AND IT'S YOUR FUNERAL.



PC CD-ROM

WELCOME TO THE HOTTEST SEAT IN SPORT.



EMULATION ZONE

Breaking news from the world of emulation, with retro reanimator Stuart Campbell

DRIVING OUT THE DARKNESS

A FEW WEEKS ago, Emulation Zone took a trip to the splendid Game On exhibition at London's Barbican Gallery, and was mildly surprised to note that contrary to your correspondent's deeply cherished beliefs, pure gameplay design isn't the be-all and end-all of retrogaming after all. The exhibition boasts many original arcade cabinets, and it came as something of a shock to Emulation Zone to realise just how much more fun it is to play *Galaxian*, *Donkey Kong* or *Ms Pac-Man* in that original cabinet surrounded by all that iconic imagery, as opposed to playing the exact same game on a generic beige PC monitor.

How fortunate, then, that Emu Zone had already suggested to the MAME team how such knowledge might benefit the daddy of all arcade emulators. The newest release of the emu, MAME 0.61, takes Emu Zone's advice and pioneers one of the most significant additions to the MAME source code in recent memory, in the form of support for bezel artwork. An arcade game's 'bezel' is the glass panel immediately surrounding the game display, which often includes attractive artwork, game instructions or additional display features (such as the lights indicating your rank in *Gorf*). Anyone with access to bezel artwork can now easily make the graphics available for use in MAME (no coding knowledge is required, just a small amount of paint-program manipulation, and you don't have to wait for the next release of MAME to implement your bezel, it works as a plug-in simply by dropping the

relevant files into the appropriate folder), and the difference it makes is stunning. Bezel-ed up games now feel much closer to the experience of playing the real coin-op. Plus of course, if your local arcade used to put games in generic cabinets, you can now get the flavour the game was supposed to have in the first place.

The new function has proved very popular, particularly among people who always wanted to contribute something positive to MAME but had no coding talent, and dozens of bezels have already been made available. Emulation Zone itself is off to try to find some scans of *The Pit* and *Mag Max*. Just when you thought MAME couldn't get any more excellent, eh viewers?

LINKS

www.mame.net - Download MAME 0.61 and bezel artwork.



Authentic arcade bezels: well worth giving up a bit of screen real estate for.



Check out the added sense of depth! Is this *Joust 3D*?



Just feel the enhanced atmosphere...

EMULATION OF THE MONTH

▲ SPATTER (Sega, coin-op, 1984)

In the mid-'80s, Japanese games giant Sega launched a heroic initiative to counter the groundswell of apocalyptic angst that prevailed at the time, with a spate of incredibly twee, pastel-coloured arcade games. Replacing the macho space-and-race themes that had characterised much of the company's work until that time (and which would return with a vengeance around 1986), came brightly-coloured games like *Teddy Boy Blues*, *Wonder Boy*, *Alex Kidd*, *Ninja Princess*, *Flicky*, *Mister Viking* and lots more, all seemingly aimed squarely at kids, with their cutesy cartoon characters and tinky-bonk music. Most of the games were pretty successful, and almost all were converted to one or more of Sega's home formats of the time. Practically the only title of the era that didn't get a home port was the long-lost

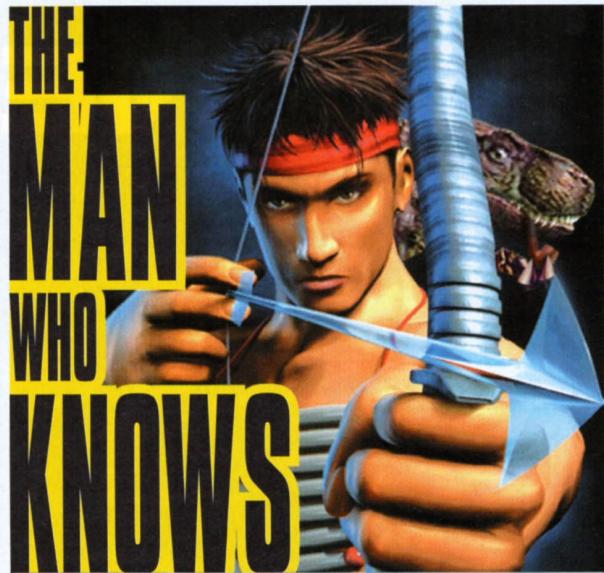
Spatter. Borrowing from a host of other coin-ops such as *Rally-X*, *Pengo* and *Head-On*, it's a simple, fast-moving maze game featuring a Teletubby on a tricycle pedalling around collecting flowers. The game's touch of genius, however, comes in the elastic fences separating the lanes of the roads, which your top-heavy avatar can hurl himself into in order to either squeeze past enemies in the same lane, or send those in the opposite lane flying. The game allows so much tactical scope within instantly graspable one-button controls that it's both enormous fun and uncontrollably addictive, and how it ever escaped a home port is a mystery to this reporter.

LINKS

www.mame.net - Download MAME 0.61



Play it with MAME, but there's no bezel yet.



IN A SHOCK REVELATION, a teenage boy who cut out the heart of a pensioner in a bizarre vampire ritual had little or no interest in sick computer games. Matthew Hardman of North Wales was not obsessed with the twisted role-playing game *Vampire*, and didn't spend countless hours immersed in it. The 17-year-old stabbed his 90 year-old victim 22 times and then drank her blood, not eerily mimicking any scene from none of the games he hadn't played.

More than three-quarters of right-thinking people believe that firing lethal weapons and punching people about the head and face in the name of sport are more acceptable pursuits than playing videogames, a survey has shown. The report published by The Countryside Alliance claims that 77 per cent of the general public think games are a worse influence on children than shooting or boxing. Rural affairs minister Alun Michael hissed: "The value of shooting is learning disciplines in a proper way as opposed to the ersatz disciplines of videogames."

People who write computer viruses are socially inept, acne-ridden cretins obsessed with unattainable sexual activities and lonely computer games, a boffin has claimed. Graham Cluley, senior technology consultant at Sophos, giggled: "Virus writers are much more likely to be teenage males than crack cyberterrorists bent on the annihilation of the Internet." Cluley cited the names of popular viruses such as *J. Lo Bikini Screensaver.exe* and *The Sims Game crack.exe*, as proof of his theory. The latest viruses, such as the *DuLoad* and *Surnova* worms, also have filenames related to gaming. An alternative theory suggests that viruses are written by unscrupulous technology consultants.

And finally, Americans have been given the opportunity to earn \$10,000 by naming their child *Turok*. In one of the more perverse marketing campaigns of recent times, Acclaim offered the prize of savings bonds towards college tuition to the first parents prepared to saddle their offspring with the name for a period of a year, starting September 2002. Senior Brand Manager at Acclaim, Tom Bass boomed: "Knowing how hard it is for parents to decide on a strong name for their child, we thought of an innovative way to solve this dilemma and help jumpstart their savings. While names like Michael and Hannah are popular, they hardly instil fear in the hearts of playground bullies, and we're thrilled to give one lucky child the bold power of the *Turok* name." It certainly beats Romeo.

In a late-breaking development, another *Turok*-related stunt, this time in the UK (offering grown men and women £500 to change their names), has fallen under a cloud of suspicion and shame with the revelation that the supposed winners were in fact jobbing actors pretending to be ordinary game fans. Acclaim has yet to respond to these damaging allegations, but it certainly casts doubt upon earlier statements that they were "overwhelmed" by the "thousands of responses" to their stunt.

We're sure the game will succeed on its own merits.

"More than three quarters of right-thinking people think games are a worse influence on children than shooting"



Make enemies on the race track and they'll stay with you.

Drivers' attitudes are displayed by coloured symbols.

Clever cars

Empire strikes back with *Total Immersion Racing*

TOTAL IMMERSION MIGHT be better known as a pointless phrase bandied about by dead-eyed marketing skunks, but it's now also set to provide the name of an attractive looking racing game. Developed by Empire-owned outfit Razorworks, it represents a bit of a departure for the team behind the *Enemy Engaged* series in so much as it features no helicopters whatsoever.

What you will get is a host of top-of-the-range automobiles, with the game boasting 18 licensed GT, GTS and LMP class cars. Throw in real world racetracks including Hockenheim, Monza, Sebring and Rockingham, and you have all the ingredients for, well, just another racing game really.

However, *Total Immersion Racing* does have a unique selling point, to borrow another marketing phrase, in that computer opponents will be blessed with an outstanding degree of artificial intelligence. We don't mean

that they will be able to do long division, rather that they'll display human traits such as memory and even the ability to bear grudges. So, if you continually carve up a particular driver, he will become increasingly perturbed and will have an aggressive attitude towards you. Eventually he may exact revenge – even several races later – ramming into you on the final corner, for instance, thus scuppering your chances of taking the championship.

Occupying the middle ground somewhere between arcade and simulation, our ECTS playtest revealed a highly competent racer, and was only cut short by the appearance of a semi-naked woman promoting *Starsky & Hutch*. Now that was totally immersive.

Razorworks • ETA November 1 • razorworks.com

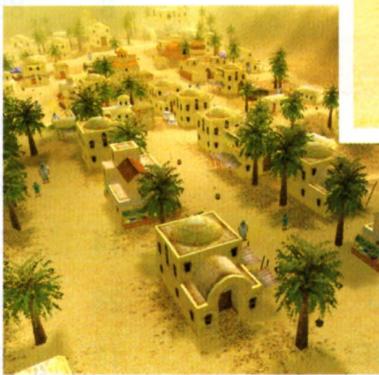


Holy land clash

Black Cactus rallies its forces for historical RTS *Crusaders*

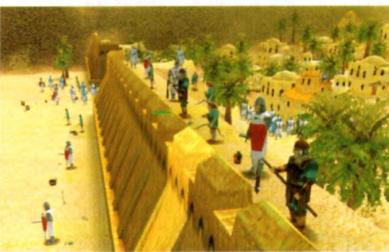
THOSE OF YOU who start the mag from the front will already have stumbled across Black Cactus' new project *Warrior Kings: Battles* (others can catch up on page 8). *Crusaders – Battle For Outremer* is the company's other work in progress RTS.

While sharing many aesthetic similarities with *Battles*, *Crusaders* also has its fair share of nuances, leaning heavily toward historical accuracy and placing much more emphasis on city building than its fictional counterpart. Utilising an enhanced version of the *Warrior Kings* engine, *Crusaders* will take place in the Middle East during the



Check out the coconuts on that.

9th, 10th and 11th centuries. Starting off as a Baron, your ultimate goal will be to become the King of Jerusalem. This will not only involve conquering neighbouring provinces, but allying yourself with the correct factions along the way. Battles will be smaller than in *Warrior Kings* (150 units max), placing even more emphasis on using the 3D terrain to your advantage, and there'll be over forty unit types to aid you in



Good sanitation and working conditions will improve worker productivity no end.



your quest for supremacy. Siege warfare will also play a major role, allowing you to line your walls with archers and pound down crenulations with mangonels.

City building will resemble that of *Zeus* and *Pharaoh*, with sanitation, health and entertainment all playing important roles. With a simplified interface and a gripping storyline by fantasy-book writer Jamie Thompson, *Crusaders* is looking like a mouth-watering prospect. More on this next issue.

Black Cactus • ETA March 2003 •
www.blackcactus.com

SHORTS

DJ ZONE



After a call went out for DJs to take part in an industry face-off as part of the ECTS festivities, PC ZONE responded with not one but two entrants: DJ Woods and Steve 'The Hatchet' Hill. After a stunning hour-long set of 10-year old dance classics that had the crowds in turns whooping, hollering and using nearby tables as makeshift podiums, PC ZONE's esteemed editor was awarded second place in the competition and spent the rest of the night being fondled by the various ladies in attendance. Steve 'The Hatchet' Hill was unplaced.

STRIKE BREAKER



Counter-Strike may have met its match! *Soldat* is a side-on 2D action game that blends elements of *Worms* and *Counter-Strike* in an addictive brew that is fast becoming a minor online phenomenon. While the game has been around for some time, it's proving increasingly popular with online fragging veterans looking for a quick, lag-free multiplayer fix. The game offers a vast arsenal of real world weapons, simple, cavernous environments and a selection of familiar FPS game modes such as deathmatch, teamplay and CTF. Download the game at: <http://nirvana.do/p/soldat/main.htm>.

RARE WHERE?



Rumours are spinning around the games industry that Rare, the developer famous for its Nintendo console games that include *GoldenEye 007*, is about to be bought by Microsoft. Previous tittle-tattle had Activision lined up as a buyer for the outfit, but a UK source has indicated to us that the £350m asking price was just too steep. One thing's for certain, Nintendo's IP, including characters such as Donkey Kong, will not be included in any deal. Does this mean we could soon see first-person shooter sequel *Perfect Dark Zero* for PC? We'll keep you posted...

Our Ghost in Havana

The Clancy boys invade Cuba in the new *Ghost Recon* expansion

WE'VE FROZEN OUR nuts in Russia and roasted them in the African desert. Now it's our turn to eat them, between puffs of fine cigars rolled on the thighs of virgins and generous slugs of cheap rum. *Island Thunder*, the new expansion pack for the brilliant tactical shooter *Ghost Recon*, confirms that the series can rival James Bond for variety of worldwide locations.

This time your job is to secure the first democratic elections in Cuba in living memory after the death of Fidel Castro in 2009. As part of a UN peacekeeping force sent to combat the remaining rebel forces, the Ghost team will be exploring completely new territory.

As with the excellent *Desert Siege*, *Island Thunder* will provide a very different experience from the original title thanks to the new terrain, which is mostly made up of lush rainforests, setting a different kind of pace and tactical approach to the gameplay. Each of the eight new missions will offer its own unique setting as well, from an abandoned airfield in the middle of a swamp and a fortress set into a mountain, to more urban environments, such as a voting centre you'll have to defend as it comes under siege. If this is as good as the last add-on pack, we'll be very happy soldiers.



Another new addition in the add-on is helicopter insertions, which sounds rather painful.



There's more enemies per level than ever before.

Red Storm • ETA Late September •
www.ghostrecon.com

CHARTS

In association with **VIRGIN MEGASTORES**

Your one-stop guide to game releases past, present and future. Whether a game is lost, looming or selling like sim-cakes, this is where you'll find it

ChartTrack**TOP 10**

	TITLE	WEEKS IN CHART	SCORE
1 NEW	MEDIEVAL: TOTAL WAR	1	90%
2 -	THE SIMS: ON HOLIDAY	21	66%
3 ▼	WARCRAFT III: REIGN OF CHAOS	8	85%
4 ▲	THE SIMS	133	86%
5 ▲	THE SIMS: HOT DATE	40	71%
6 NEW	SUDDEN STRIKE II	1	72%
7 ▼	GRAND THEFT AUTO III	14	95%
8 -	MEDAL OF HONOR: ALLIED ASSAULT	28	94%
9 ▲	SOLDIER OF FORTUNE II: DOUBLE HELIX	13	92%
10 ▼	NEVERWINTER NIGHTS	9	91%

YOUR SHOUT

Sudden Strike II is exactly the same as the first one – how arrogant must the developers be to think they can get away with this sort of laziness?

shadow

Medieval is exactly the same as the first one, and that's exactly why I love it...

fCon

If *The Sims* was a TV show it would be *Big Brother*. *Medieval* would be the History Channel, and *GTA III* would be *Renegade*. Me, I'll stick with *Band Of Brothers* – bring on the *Medal Of Honor* expansion!

pinkerton

Have your say at www.pczone.co.uk

I've just got to the second city in *GTA III* and I'd have to say the romance is fading. I don't want to say it, but... overrated?

majik



megastores

TOP 10**COMPETITION**

megastores

1 GRAND THEFT AUTO III
2 MAX PAYNE
3 MEDIEVAL: TOTAL WAR
4 WARCRAFT III: REIGN OF CHAOS
5 NEVERWINTER NIGHTS
6 SUDDEN STRIKE II
7 THE SIMS: ON HOLIDAY
8 CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 01/02
9 MEDAL OF HONOR: ALLIED ASSAULT
10 COSSACKS: GOLD EDITION

Win the entire Virgin Top 10!

Once again, PC ZONE and Virgin have teamed up to give you the chance to win every game in the current Virgin Top 10. All you have to do to enter the draw is answer the following simple question:

QUESTION: What's the name of the living, breathing city in which Take 2's astonishing *Grand Theft Auto III* is set?

Answers on a postcard to: PC ZONE Chart Compo (CPCZ11A), Dennis Publishing, PO Box 154, Bradford BD1 5RZ. Closing date: October 16, 2002

- Please include your name, address, daytime phone number, email address, job title and company name (and age if under 18).
- Please tell us if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers or new products from other companies.
- Please indicate whether you are a current subscriber to PC ZONE.

Terms and conditions: winners will be notified by post. No cash alternative. Prizes not necessarily as shown. No correspondence will be entered into. The editor's decision is final. All the other usual competition rules, conditions and restrictions apply.

CHART COMMENT

BASED ON CHART-TRACK TOP 10

ANOTHER STRONG month for PC games, with the appearance of the brilliant *Medieval* and the somewhat disappointing *Sudden Strike II* in the official UK sales charts. *The Sims* franchise has regained some lost ground across its three current leading titles, just when it looked like we might get a bit of respite from the bloody little critters. And I'm sure you don't need reminding that the *Unleashed* add-on is warming up for the Christmas rush, no doubt followed by our first glimpse of *The Sims 2* some time in early 2003. (Will it never end...?)

The remaining five top-sellers for this month are all triple-A games with plenty of legs in them yet, though it may be slightly alarming for Infogrames to see *Neverwinter Nights* plummeting from 3 to 10 in its third month on the shelves. However, it's still a good showing for what is essentially a niche title.

Unsurprisingly, both *Zoo Tycoon: Dinosaur Digs* and *Task Force Dagger* have made hasty exits from the charts after a one-issue stay each.

Next month all our money is on the riotous online shooter *Battlefield 1942* for top spot (despite its disappointing single-player review). Place bets now.

Anthony Holden



US TOP 10

1 WARCRAFT III: REIGN OF CHAOS

2 THE SIMS: VACATION

3 THE SIMS

4 MEDAL OF HONOR: ALLIED ASSAULT

5 NEVERWINTER NIGHTS

6 BACKYARD BASEBALL 2003

7 MADDEN NFL 2003

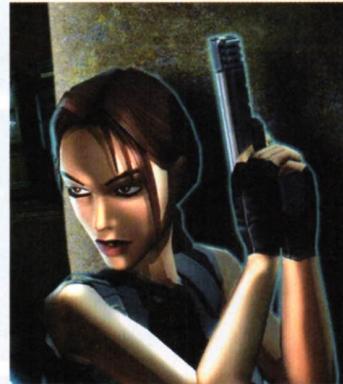
8 THE SIMS: HOT DATE

9 GRAND THEFT AUTO III

10 ZOO TYCOON

MISSING IN ACTION

The war's not over until the last game comes home...



Tomb Raider: The Angel Of Darkness

NOW, WE MIGHT be jumping the gun with this one a little bit, but when we saw the latest *Tomb Raider* at ECTS we were wholly unconvinced that it's going to ship on the PC at Christmas. The latest code is looking far from finished and with all efforts seemingly going towards the PS2 version we're going to go out on a limb and say that if Lara's your girl you might have to wait until, oh, February 14 for your love to be requited. Just don't quote us on it.

Core Design • ETA February 2003 • www.tomraider.com

Rainbow Six: Raven Shield

BAD NEWS FOR *Rainbow Six* fans: the new shooter from Red Storm has been put back until February 2003. We actually think this is all good though as apparently it's going to give them the time they need to "deliver the ultimate *Rainbow Six* experience and a game worthy of the Clancy name." We're not so sure about the last point, but having been mighty impressed with the code we saw at ECTS, we applaud the decision to miss out on Christmas sales to concentrate on tweaking the game to perfection.

Ubi Soft Montreal • ETA February 2003 • www.raven-shield.com

Outcast 2: The Lost Paradise

THE FUTURE OF this good-looking adventure sequel has always been troubled, but it seems that the game has finally been thrown out with the trash. Belgian developers Appeal have gone bankrupt amidst talk of internal strife, and although there's an online petition at www.outcastii.net, we think the death knell has tolled. Of course we'd love to be proved wrong and if you're a fan you should log on to the site. If there are enough of you we'd be more than happy to retract the last rites we've just administered.

Appeal • Killed In Action • www.appeal.be

INCOMING!

These are the big games that are going on sale in the next month or so. All dates are correct at the time of going to press, but we'd check ahead before running down to the shops in the driving rain.

GAME	PUBLISHER	RELEASE DATE
Hitman 2: Silent Assassin	Eidos	September 20
The Thing	VU Games	September 20
Emperor: ROTMK	VU Games	September 27
Prisoner Of War	Codemasters	September 27
Battlefield 1942	EA	September 27
Stronghold: Crusader	Take 2	September 27
Civilization III: Play The World	Infogrames	September 27
Unreal Tournament 2003	Infogrames	October 4
Mace Griffin Bounty Hunter	EA	October 25
No One Lives Forever 2	VU Games	November 22

THE GOLDEN JOYSTICK AWARDS 2002



Hurry up and have your say,
voting closes soon...

WE MIGHT BE the experts who get paid to review games, but you're the buying public. Ultimately you know whether the shiny disc you've inserted into your PC is worthy of the £30 you've spent on it, or whether it's fit only for inserting somewhere unsavoury. That's why we want to give you the chance to vote for your favourite games of the last 12 months.

This year, instead of running our own awards in isolation we've teamed up with our sister magazine, *Computer And Video Games*, to bring you the biggest industry awards bash of the year. This means that as well as voting for your favourite PC games you'll be able to register your vote for games irrespective of platform. It's a living, breathing democracy that even the *Daily Mail* would be proud of.

By the time this magazine goes on sale we'll have counted the first round of votes and we'll have narrowed down the games in each category to a shortlist of the best titles. You'll still be able to vote for your favourite from the shortlist, but this is your last chance before voting closes and the winners are announced on October 25.



SPONSORED by



1 GAME OF THE YEAR (ALL PLATFORMS)

Sponsored by jungle.com

2 PC GAME OF THE YEAR

Medal Of Honor
Morrowind
Grand Theft Auto III
Max Payne
Jedi Knight II: Jedi Outcast



3 ONLINE GAME OF THE YEAR

EverQuest: Shadows Of Luclin
Return To Castle Wolfenstein
Dark Age Of Camelot
Counter-Strike 1.5
Laser Squad Nemesis

4 BRITISH DEVELOPER OF THE YEAR

Lionhead (Black & White: Creature Isles)
Creative Assembly (Medieval: Total War)
Geoff Crammond (Grand Prix 4)
Black Cactus (Warrior Kings)

VOTE AND WIN!

Voting couldn't be easier. All you need to do is log on to the Internet, visit www.goldenjoystick.co.uk and submit your vote. We've already counted the first set of votes and have chosen a shortlist of the best games, which you can still vote for up to a few days before the awards bash. When you've done this you'll be entered into a prize draw. You could be one of five lucky winners joining us at the Dorchester Hotel in London on October 25, where Jonathan Ross will be presenting the awards. Two runners-up will get one minute to dash around Virgin Megastore, cramming as many games, CDs and DVDs into a shopping trolley as they can*. Sounds good? Then get voting...

6 HARDWARE OF THE YEAR

Sponsored by Universal Interactive Studio

GeForce 4
Sound Blaster Audigy
AMD Athlon
Intel Pentium 4

7 MOST WANTED GAME OF CHRISTMAS 2002

Championship Manager 4
Splinter Cell
Freelancer
Unreal 2
Counter-Strike: Condition Zero
Command & Conquer: Generals
James Bond 007: Nightfire

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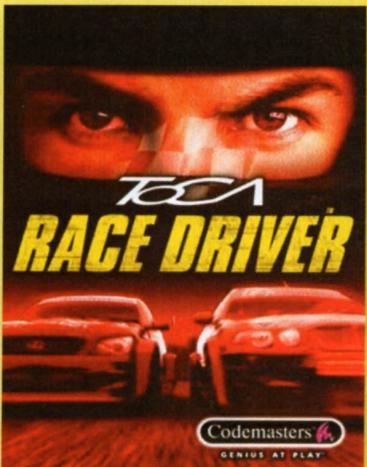
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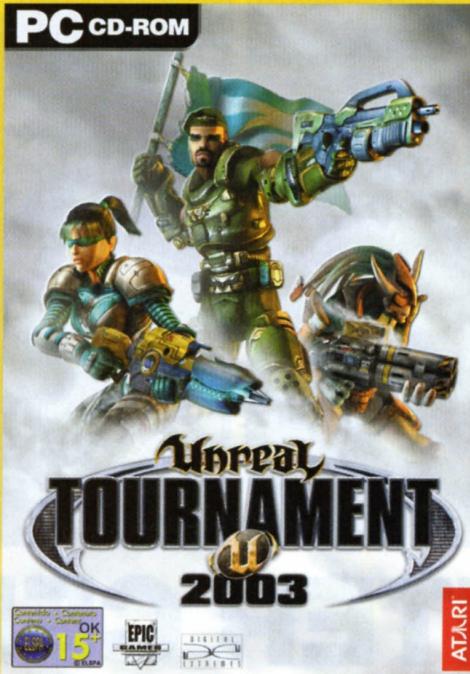


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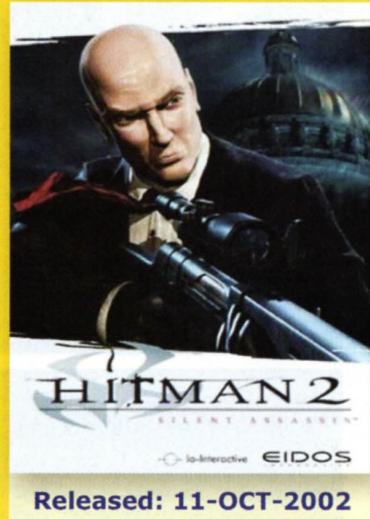


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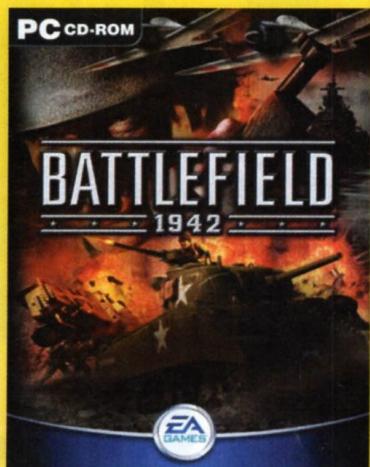
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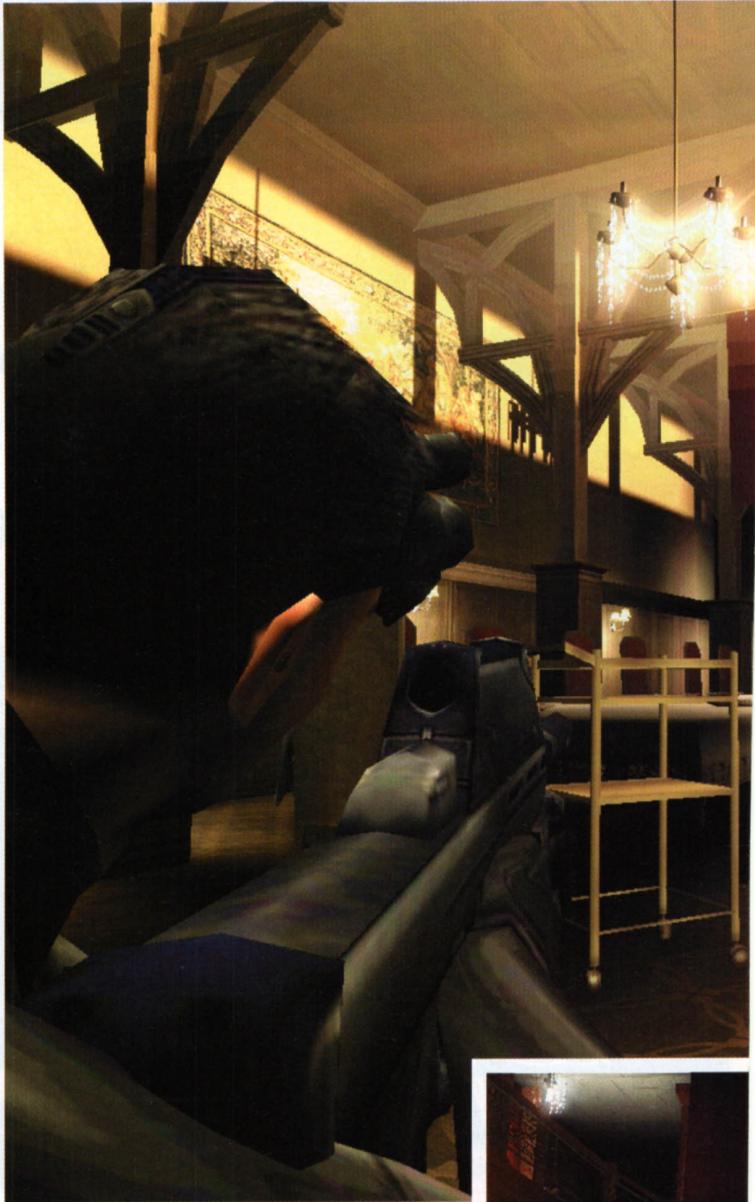


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SPLINTER CELL

Screenshots so stealthy they'll self-destruct in two minutes

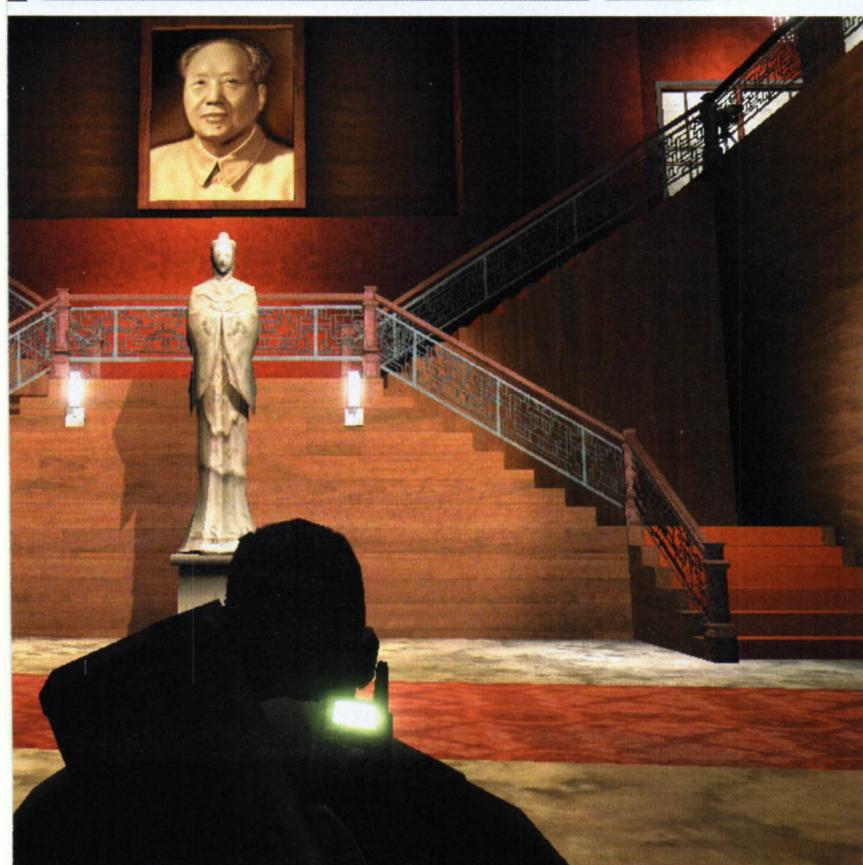
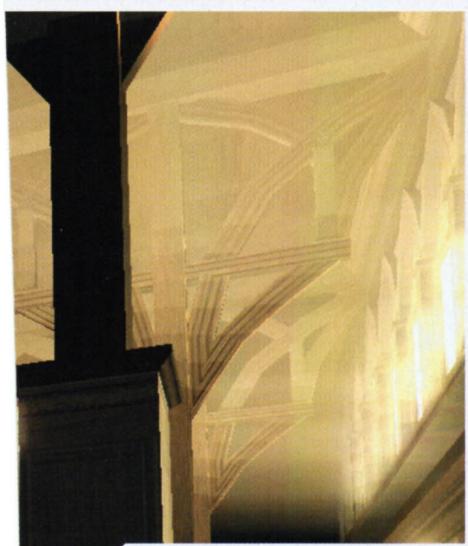
SPLINTER CELL MAY be the best looking and most anticipated game this side of *Doom III*, but an even more impressive fact is that it's actually running on schedule. This means you have less than two months to wait before stealth action gets a new name with the arrival of hero Sam Fisher.

To be honest though, what the hell sort of name is Sam Fisher? We told Ubi Soft: it's all very well having the best looking stealth game ever with your fancy *Unreal* engine and your real-time lighting and shadows, but if you want to beat Solid Snake, you're going to need a hero that sounds just as cool, just as... macho (not in a Village People way, mind). I mean, 'Solid Snake'. It practically screams: "I've got a huge todger and there's nothing you can do about it."

We told them: if you want cool and manly, call him 'Mandrake McFreeze', or 'Colossal Balzac'. Call him 'Girth Johnson' and his heroine 'Niagra Honeywell'; just don't give him some pussy name like Samuel, or Dave.

They seemed to be listening, but there must have been copyright complications or something, because they didn't follow through. Such a shame... 'Sam Fisher'. Sounds like someone you might buy insurance from. "Move over Robert from Accounts, here comes Sam Fisher to redefine stealth spread-sheeting."

Still, we have to admit the game does look pretty goddamn amazing. It has all those shadowy bits and gadgety things, and Mandrake, I mean Sam, has a few cool tricks up his sleeve too. Even if he does have a small wiener. **HZ**



FEATURE

YOU'RE IN THE ARMY NOW...

YOU'RE IN THE ARMY NOW...



US Government, FY2002, Historical Tables. For DOD FY2002 budget amendment
Transcript, Background briefing on the FY2002 budget amendment
Global Priorities Project, Inc.

1985

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The US Army cites 200 years of practical warfare experience as a guarantee of authenticity.

VIRTUAL PROPAGANDA

THE US IS NOT THE ONLY ONE USING GAME TECHNOLOGY TO SCORE POLITICAL POINTS

Underash (www.underash.net) is the first ever Arabic FPS, constituting a digital protest against the Palestinian situation. You play the role of a young Palestinian man, Ahmed, battling against occupying Israeli forces in numerous skirmish scenarios. "*Underash* is a call to justice, realising truth, preventing wronging and aggression," says project director M Adnám Salim. "The human conscience will be neither deceived by the cheating of Beelzebub nor confused by the violence of the tyrannical aggression and the violence of resistance in self-defence, nor will the destructive rocket be equal to the symbolic stone." "*Underash* is a chance to strike back at those games which always uses Arabs and Moslems as natural enemies," notes an Arab news service, with unanswerable justice.



The cheating of Beezlebub will be stayed by the righteous hand of PunkBuster.

academy West Point, is enthusiastic about the project. Of *America's Army: Soldiers*, the as-yet-unreleased RPG game that simulates a military career, he says: "What *Soldiers* is, is similar to one of the most popular games out there, called *The Sims*. But this is beyond state of the art. The way the *Soldiers* game runs is that it uses a story engine that was created specifically for this project, and the way it works has never been done before. It creates a movie for you in real time, based on the inputs you give to your character. Most other games of the *Sims* type are giant decision trees, but in our game you really have an infinite number of paths. It can create in real time stories that are affected by virtually everything else that's going on in the game."

It is interesting that the military seeks to sell their product by claiming its superiority to one of the most successful non-violent PC games ever. It is also interesting that Major Chambers has never apparently played *Deus Ex*... Such claims of ground-breaking narrative technology should always be taken with a pinch of salt.

ALL THAT YOU CAN BE

But what of *Operations*, the strict FPS part of *America's Army*? Oops, better not call it a first-person shooter. That's politically uncomfortable right now. It's officially a 'first-person mission experience'. All right, then.

"We've gone to great lengths to painstakingly show the correct detail that's involved with weapons, and employing weapons, and the physics of employing weapons," says Chambers. He also emphasises the level of detail in "the physics of communications – the real liability you have on the battlefield in the

small-unit operations." He goes on: "Other games don't have the advantage of 200 years of expertise in these matters, so we knew that was our competitive advantage, and we were going to fill that niche in the market."

Well, exactly. And *America's Army: Operations* is indeed at the cutting edge of technology, being the first game released that is based on the next-generation *Unreal* engine. That's \$6.3million of US taxpayers' money well spent, then. But the big question seems to be this: what is *America's Army* actually for? Is it a simple PR exercise, much like a TV ad promoting life in the army? Or is it a ploy to recruit young kids, who'll be so hooked on the game that they'll willingly become the next generation of real-life cannon fodder?

Michael Zyda, director of the MOVES Institute, responds: "*America's Army* is a medium for strategic communication for a generation unfamiliar with the US Army. Recruitment is a subsidiary effect of that communication." But pre-publicity for the game explicitly stated that it was designed to 'target 13- to 18-year-olds for recruitment'. And even Zyda admits its propagandist slant. "In *America's Army*, the use of story is to provide a synthetic experience as to what a potential career in the Army may be like."

Outspoken journalist and film-maker John Pilger describes the game as just one more instance of what he calls "the militarisation of play" – a systematic attempt by interested parties to introduce the motives and techniques of military institutions into our leisure time and thereby normalise them. "It's a form of pornography," he maintains.

In this light, the language used by Brian Ball, the game's lead level designer,

THE FUTURE OF WAR – AND GAMES

WHAT ELSE IS THE US NAVY'S HI-TECH MOVES INSTITUTE WORKING ON?

The America's Army project truly is child's play compared to the other activities of the MOVES institute. If only one per cent of their research filters back into games and other consumer applications, we may be looking at a revolution. Here's a taster:

- Computer-Generated Autonomy: 'Computer-generated characters that accurately portray the actions and responses of human individuals, that can modify their behaviour automatically, and modify their behavior over time.' So, we're talking AI that learns, with memory, behaviour and decision-making capacities indistinguishable from a human's.
- The Context Machine: inspired by Neal Stephenson's novel, *The Diamond Age*, MOVES is working on 'augmented cognition', where lightweight, wearable computing devices provide extra directives and information to the mobile soldier.
- Story Engines: 'The goal of interactive simulation of combat is to effect a realistic, compelling chain of events in which the user feels himself to be an actor. From the Department of Defense perspective, this imaginative buy-in leads to superior training and more informed criticism of systems, tactics, and doctrines under evaluation.'
- Immersive Virtual Environments (VEs) with haptic interfaces: 'The ultimate implementation of a Virtual Environment would resemble the *Star Trek* holodeck, where simulation is indistinguishable from reality.'



is most extraordinary: "If you have loved any action/military-themed game such as *Counter-Strike*, *Operation Flashpoint*, *Delta Force*, or *Ghost Recon*, then get ready for a new girlfriend." ...Hello? "Get ready folks," he continues. "the Army has done something very special and you are going to love it and the Army like never before."

I'm going to love the Army? Hang on, I thought I was just playing a game...

WAR/GAMES

The military entertainment complex is not just a buzz-phrase; it's real. The list of military inventions that subsequently found mass-market uses is salutary. The development of computers was accelerated by the urgent need to break German military codes during the Second World War. The first large-scale use of microchips was in the guidance system of American Minuteman missiles in 1962. The charge-coupled device used in today's digital cameras was developed for the Pentagon in 1970 so that high-orbit satellites could detect the flare of launching Soviet missiles. The first developments in GUIs (Graphic User Interfaces) for computers were made by the Department of Defense's Advanced

Research Project Administration, and today's Internet grew out of the same organisation's network. Video cameras with built-in gyroscopes to prevent shake were originally designed for the US Air Force.

The military also has a long history of collaboration with Hollywood, so that the US Department of Defense will lend helicopters and other hardware for use in films such as *Behind Enemy Lines*, on the understanding that they get script approval. (This is presumably why even such a dark and brutal film as Ridley Scott's *Black Hawk Down* will inevitably turn into a happy-clappy advert for the heroism and comradeship of military life in its last ten minutes.) Famously, such synergy was not forthcoming for Francis Ford Coppola's anti-war epic, *Apocalypse Now*, so the director had to hire aircraft at enormous cost from the Philippines military.

And military links with videogames are also long established. The seminal arcade game *Missile Command* grew out of an actual defence simulation to see how many Soviet ICBMs a radar operator could track before becoming overwhelmed. *Battlezone* was modified by the US military to be used as a Bradley Fighting Vehicle simulator. *Marine Doom* was a *Doom* mod specially engineered for training four-person Marine Corps fire teams, which featured realistic modelling of real Marine Corps weapons such as the M-16, M-249 and M-67 frag grenades. More recently, the British military has begun using a customised build of *Half-Life* called *DIVE* (for Dismounted Infantry Virtual Environment) to simulate the uses of new weapons and vehicles. And Lockheed Martin, the aerospace contractor and engineer of large-scale military simulators, such as the British Army's £330m Combined Arms Tactical Trainer, had a hand in the development of Sega's mid-1990s arcade hardware.

A PHANTOM MENACE?

In one sense *America's Army* is the logical culmination of this history. But in another sense it constitutes a kind of reversal. Unlike entertainment products such as *Battlezone* or *Doom* that were subsequently co-opted for military uses, *America's Army* seems to be a military product which is primarily designed not for in-house training but so as to improve the Army's public image and drive recruitment, which has been in chronic decline ever since the Vietnam war. And yet it also seems that the US military has subtle uses for the game, which have not been widely publicised.

In 1997, MOVES director Michael Zyda brought together representatives of Hollywood and the US military in a conference whose title was 'Modeling and Simulation: Linking Entertainment and Defense'. Back then, he was praising *Marine Doom*. "Immersive simulated environments are central to the goals and needs of both the Department of Defense and the entertainment industry," Zyda said, summing up the mood of the conference.

"The Army has done something special and you're going to love it like never before"

BRIAN BALL
LEAD LEVEL DESIGNER,
AMERICA'S ARMY

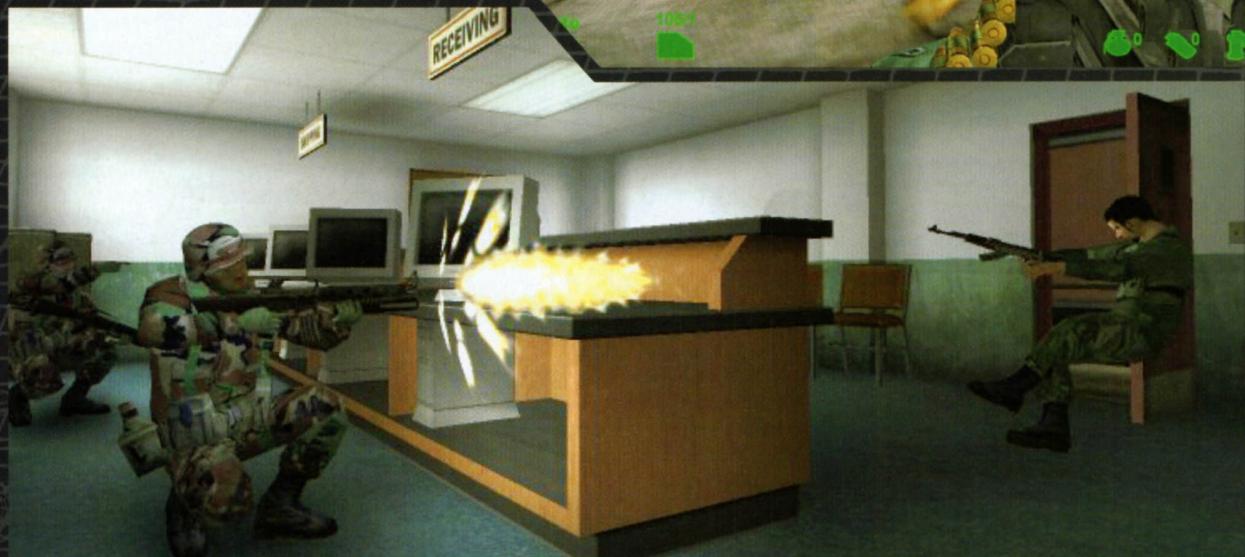


FEATURE

YOU'RE IN THE ARMY NOW...



Loving the army: some pundits see *America's Army* as a thinly-veiled attempt to counter and co-opt the frequently anti-establishment nature of PC (and especially online) gaming.



MODS AND ROCKERS

WHAT MIGHT THE MOD COMMUNITY DO TO MAKE AMERICA'S ARMY MORE 'REALISTIC'?

While *America's Army* is very limiting in what actions you can perform (without being sent to jail or otherwise disciplined), the mod community is sure to attempt some slightly less sterilised versions of military life. In the name of true realism, we predict the following additions:

- 'Sim Sex': allows sexual harassment of female comrades as normal recreational activity. But if you sleep with an officer's wife, it's a court martial.
- 'Smart Bombing': allows pinpoint targeting of missiles to destroy, say, a

Chinese Embassy, then lets you attend a press conference in which you claim that the targeting system malfunctioned.

- 'Ears Looking at You': allows the player to cut off the ears of dead Arab 'terrorists' and string them round your avatar's neck in an attractively modelled necklace.
- 'Rampage Mode': encourages the player to blow up as many civilian facilities – hospitals, television stations, power plants – as possible, and then appear on TV to speak sadly about the inevitable tragedy of war.



How long will the game remain such a sanitised vision of military life?

Right now – and here's the key – the military is specifically interested in massively networked gaming events, because they provide a way for it to simulate and thus analyse real warfare scenarios. The US military is keen, for example, to be able to model something like the Desert Shield and Desert Storm operations in Iraq and Kuwait. "From a defense standpoint," Zyda explains, "they would like to model a full giant battle like that, a full simulation. There were 300,000 soldiers fighting in that thing, driving tanks, bringing ammunition and supplies and so on. That's why the Department of Defense has said we would like to have 300,000 participate in our network simulation."

So excited teens who download *America's Army* and play it online are not only going to love the army so much they want to join it, see exciting foreign places and get shot in them, but they are already going to be unwitting guinea pigs in a massive military simulation preparing strategies for future war in the Middle East and elsewhere. Play *America's Army* and you become a beta tester for George W Bush's insane mission to save his daddy's reputation. I guess there's no such thing as a free lunch after all...

The magazine article in which Zyda's comments appear is headed 'Insane US

Military Utopians Use Video Games To Plan Iraq War'. Its author, Don Phau, told me: "The Army doesn't want citizen soldiers but clones." And that is the fear among some observers – that the game seeks to brainwash kids into loving all things military through the use of what has been called 'operant conditioning'.

IN-VOLUNTEERS

It was found during the 1950s that soldiers trained to shoot at bull's-eye targets often subsequently did badly in real-life battle situations, because they had never shot at fellow humans before. After this research, life-sized cut-outs of human figures began to be used in place of bull's-eyes, and were found to be far more effective at translating into real battlefield skills. This is part of 'operant conditioning', which in general means training the subject to perform a set of skills without thinking, using rewards to reinforce successful behaviour. Since this is a proven psychological device in the military, an increasing number of vocal commentators take the line that videogames must also be doing the same thing to children. If shooting at a cardboard cut-out begins to brainwash you, how much more effective is an animated avatar of a terrorist made up



"Pushing this game to the nation's youth is like giving an M-16 to every kid in America"

A COMMENTATOR WHO PREFERS TO REMAIN ANONYMOUS

of tens of thousands of polygons? And if this is an effective device in modern VR training for soldiers, why should everyone else be immune?

Lieutenant Colonel David Grossman trains army and Special Forces around the world, and is the author of *Stop Teaching Our Kids to Kill*, a book that blames the high-school massacres of recent years on the operant conditioning performed by hundreds of hours of playing *Counter-Strike* and other violent videogames. But what does he think of *America's Army*?

"That game is an E-rated game [for everyone]," he says, "just one segment is rated T for teen. If you're going to be worried about *America's Army*, how much more infinitely worried should we get about the mature-rated games which are not provided to give information about how the military works but which are purely gratuitous?" Besides, he adds dismissively, "not many people are playing the game all the way through." (This is despite the fact that only a few training levels of the game were available at the time.)

Since Grossman is worried about graphic violence, he doesn't mind *America's Army* so much, since no blood or gore is sprayed. But perhaps this lack of graphic violence is a more insidious flaw in *America's Army*. If you learn from playing this game that enemies you shoot don't die horrific deaths but just fall over gracefully, you're learning something rather bizarre. That sort of attitude might keep you sane as an actual soldier, but it might make you an unusual sort of citizen.

Apart from the lack of gore, *America's Army* is in other respects astonishingly realistic, as you would expect. You can go to sniper school; all the real weapons and vehicles behave as they do in real life; and if your gun jams you are even shown how to fieldstrip it so as to get it operating again. Is it really wise to present so much information as to how the military works in a public product that is available for free download? We may remember stories of al-Qaeda operatives practicing flying planes into buildings using *Microsoft Flight Simulator*. How much more excited would they be to get their hands on *America's Army*?

Michael Zyda waves away this idea. "Everything in the game suite is already available in the public domain in various television shows and in print," he says. Well, yes, but *America's Army* sure makes it convenient to get all your information in one place. Who knows whether the United States will have cause to regret such explicit self-advertisement?

And even if you're not a terrorist, this game arguably provides a dangerous sort of knowledge. It has long been a golden rule in the American military's outreach programs for high-school children –

TRAINING KIDS TO KILL?

IS THE ACTING OUT OF VIOLENCE IN GAMES HARMFUL?

Lt Col David Grossman of the US military is on a crusade against violent videogames. He says that media depiction of violence must fulfil three criteria to be defined as harmful. One: is it happy violence? (That is, is violence rewarded and made fun?) Two: is the violence punished? Is the aftermath shown? And three: is it realistic, graphic violence? *Grand Theft Auto III* and *Soldier Of Fortune* are the kinds of game that fail all three tests, and that Grossman rages against. "Everyone remembers the Surgeon General's statement that smoking causes cancer, but no one seems to remember that the Surgeon General in 1972 also said that media violence causes violence," Grossman told me. Part of the problem is that the certification system just doesn't work, so that adult-rated games inevitably find their way into the hands of children. If games can be used successfully to train soldiers, what might they be doing to us? Check out www.killology.org and find out.

STOP TEACHING OUR KIDS TO KILL

A CALL TO ACTION
AGAINST TV, MOVIE &
VIDEO GAME VIOLENCE

Lt. Col. DAVE GROSSMAN
and GLORIA DEGAETANO



Soldier Of Fortune: is showing gore more harmful than glossing over it?

weekend cadet courses and so on – that youngsters must not be trained in real military tactics or learn to use live weapons (instead, they practice target shooting with air rifles and similar guns). But here is a game specifically targeted at America's youth which breaks that rule in every conceivable way. The transfer of skills from a virtual environment into a real one is still heavily debated – after all, being good at mouselook doesn't make you good at aiming a real rifle – but a game that teaches real tactical commando skills is certainly alarming for those who would blame Littleton on a *Quake* addiction. One commentator who preferred not to be identified told me that pushing this game to the nation's youth was like giving an M-16 to every kid in America.

CALL TO ARMS

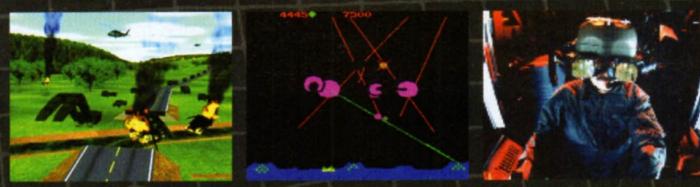
Still, this thing will run and run. The MOVES Institute is already working on a sequel, called *MP*, which will simulate the role of military police. "If you look at what's going on in Afghanistan," Michael Zyda says, "once the Special Forces take over, then it becomes a Military Police operation. You then have to worry about

checkpoints: is there a car bomb coming up? There's a whole game that's coming into our minds right now."

Does making entertainment, or even edutainment, out of contemporary real-life scenarios of suffering and death leave a bad taste in the mouth? Or is it arguably more responsible than the kind of fictional scenarios in which your enemies are cryogenically preserved Nazis, or genetically engineered zombies, or anonymous South American drug lords? Should games be working harder to make us aware of the political and human consequences of violent action?

With the US military's interest in how *America's Army* plays out online, and parallel developments in unmanned vehicles controlled remotely by pilots sitting at computer consoles, one can even envisage future wars being played out entirely as if they were a massively multiplayer online game. No one will have to confront the blood and chaos of the battlefield, except perhaps the dead civilians swept under the carpet of the euphemistic phrase 'collateral damage'.

Ever since French philosopher Jean Baudrillard's analysis of TV coverage of the Gulf War as a giant videogame, the line between war and entertainment has become more and more flimsy. In the future, we may not be able to tell the difference at all.



Games and military technology have worked hand in hand since *Battlezone*...

• Steven Poole is the author of *Trigger Happy: The Inner Life of Videogames* (Fourth Estate). He has never shot anyone in real life.



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DIG IN

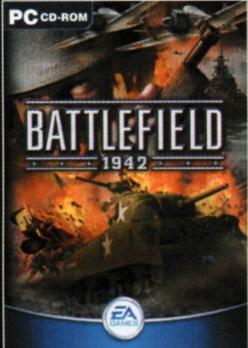
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Bring out the big guns

COMMAND & CONQUER: GENERALS

Command & Conquer goes 3D, Private Pratchett goes to LA for some hands-on experience in the field

CV

Westwood
Electronic Arts

WESTWOOD STUDIOS

Started in 1985 from the back of a Las Vegas garage by Brett Sperry and Louis Castle, Westwood has gone on to become one of the biggest names in RTS gaming

1995 *Command & Conquer*

The one that kicked it all off. Serious warfare between GDI and NOD forces on a global scale. One of the classic RTS games of all time.

1996 *Command & Conquer: Red Alert*

The franchise branches off slightly with an altered version of WWII with Stalin heading up the bad guys instead of Hitler.

1999 *Command & Conquer: Tiberian Sun*

A return to the original C&C with more of a sci-fi edge. Probably the least revered of all the C&C games

2001 *Command & Conquer: Red Alert*

Definitely a more anticipated sequel than *Tiberian Sun* and infinitely better received. Cheesy humour was getting to excessive levels, especially the FMVs and this was continued in the sequel *Yuri's Revenge*.



THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER EA Pacific/Westwood
PUBLISHER EA
WEBSITE www.generals.ea.com
OUT January 21 2003

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Fully 3D world with superb graphics and real-world physics
- Three diverse sides with 12 different units, 12 different buildings and multiple upgrades
- Three Generals per side, each with their own unique abilities and units
- Most advanced in-game map editor to ever ship with a C&C title

THERE'S ALWAYS

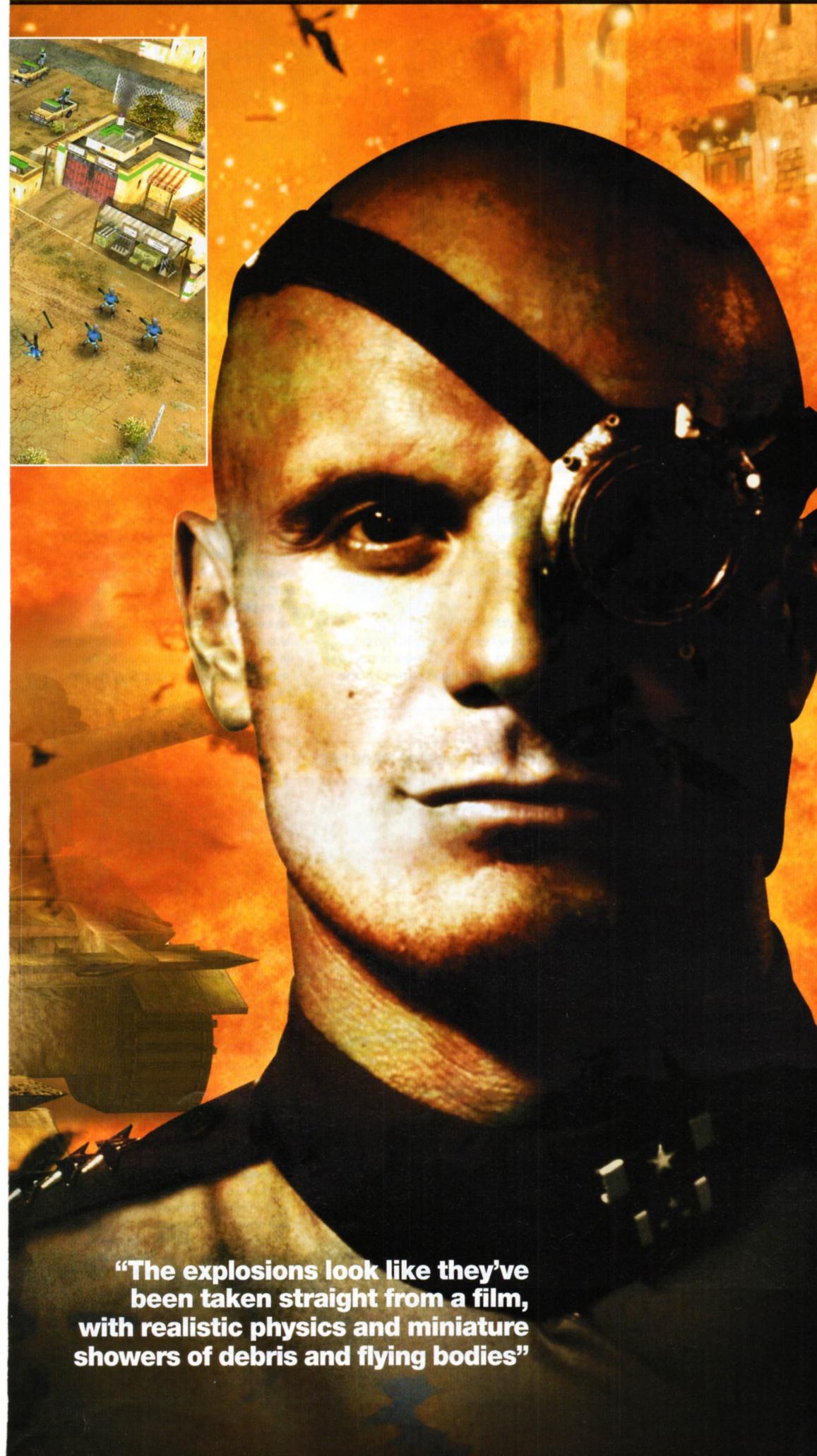
been something innately comfy about C&C games. Despite their flaws, and there have been many throughout the seven-year history of the franchise, the games have always achieved immense playability through addictive gameplay, a somewhat cheesy sense of humour and an aura of toy-like wonder built into every single unit. After Westwood's *Dune* series went 3D last year in *Emperor: Battle for Dune*, it was only a matter of time before the C&C games would follow suit.

After several years of virtual bangs, whistles and whoops behind a curtain of

secrecy at Westwood's satellite studio EA Pacific (the developers behind *Red Alert 2* and the *Yuri's Revenge* expansion) the result was revealed earlier this year as *Command & Conquer: Generals*. For the first time we get our hands on the code and find out just what you can expect to see when C&C is reborn.

RETURN TO THE OLD

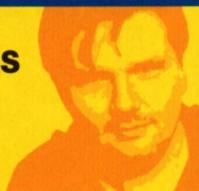
Westwood's traditional three-way war, pioneered by the *Dune* games and picked up in the C&C games in *RA2: Yuri's Revenge*, is the central gameplay premise for *Generals*. This time it takes place in the



"The explosions look like they've been taken straight from a film, with realistic physics and miniature showers of debris and flying bodies"

Q&A

MARK SKAGGS



The executive producer of Generals talks wars and warfare with PC ZONE.

PCZ *Generals* seems a big step forward from the previous games. What makes it C&C?

MARK It comes down to the style of gameplay, the style of combat and some basic gameplay features, such as a simplified resource system and the modern warfare theme, which we feel makes it C&C. There's a certain style in us as game makers and that's what comes out.

PCZ What are the aspects you are particularly conscious of during the development of *Generals*?

MARK I want to be certain that we can deliver on the experience across the game and I also want to make sure we don't get burnt out on our own stuff and forget about the quality we always want to put in.

PCZ Where did you draw your influences from outside the *Command & Conquer* world?

MARK Every single game everywhere! There are so many great ideas out there. Almost every great game has one or two things to learn from. One of the things I looked at with the *Age Of...* line is their sense of a slower game pace. At first I didn't like it because it's not that fast C&C style, but then I relaxed into it and experienced it the way it should be experienced. So I learnt a lot about that and also about the life that they bring to the world.

PCZ What do you think current RTS games do well?

MARK We're big fans of the *Age Of...* and *Warcraft* series. They each have their areas, which they do really well at. Things like bringing out the personality of units, which is something we like to do. Also some of the advances other games have made in interface, which make it easier for players to play.

PCZ So what are the things they're doing wrong?

MARK I think one of the problems some people have is that when they're doing their third or fourth generation RTS game, they say: 'Well we've done that, so let's do this' and it just gets more complex and more heavy. There are hardcore simulations out there and that's good, but the broader entertainment experience is what I really enjoy. I want to have fun!

PCZ How do you see the C&C world developing in the future?

MARK One of the big things we were looking at was a persistent online component. It would be a cool thing to do, but it just wasn't the right time. What we here can make and make well, is the game we're doing now, and there's a lot of great stuff we can use as a foundation for the future.



When units explode it's like someone's blown up a Lego truck in your face using billion dollar special effects. **Another one bites the dust.**

near future between the USA, China and the terrorist organisation of the GLA (Global Liberation Army) within the structure of a continuous campaign, with eight to ten missions for each side, 20-25 maps and a skirmish mode. "People like quality rather than volume," claims producer of C&C: Generals, Harvard Bonin in defence of the three-sided war which still seems slightly antiquated when compared to the multiple sides found in RTS games such as *Cossacks* and

Warcraft III. "The more sides you have, the harder it is to make them distinct and the harder it is to make them play together. You've got the high-tech USA, the low-tech GLA and the middle guys who are China. The Americans are really about saving people, the GLA are like 'we don't care about people' and China think along the lines of 'we've got people so let's use them in war', so they play off each other well. The idea is to keep quality high at the expense of quantity."

Generals also marks a return to the more serious style of gameplay and narrative seen in the original C&C, which is somewhat ironic since EA Pacific drifted so far left of field with the slightly goofy RA2 and *Yuri's Revenge* that, although the gameplay was still highly enjoyable, it actually seemed to be parodying itself. "It was intentional to stay away from the goofy comic-book stuff," explains, Mark Skaggs, the executive producer of *Generals*. "We also stayed away from the science fiction which *Tiberian Sun* went into. *Tiberian Sun* was also very serious and hardcore and we wanted to do something that was in the middle. So we've got modern-day war stuff, but that doesn't have to be hardcore and we've had fun designing

the units and their battlefield reactions. Our goal is to make a game that's like a Hollywood action war movie that has this feeling of fun, so when you walk out, you feel good. It's not serious kind of stuff like *Saving Private Ryan*."

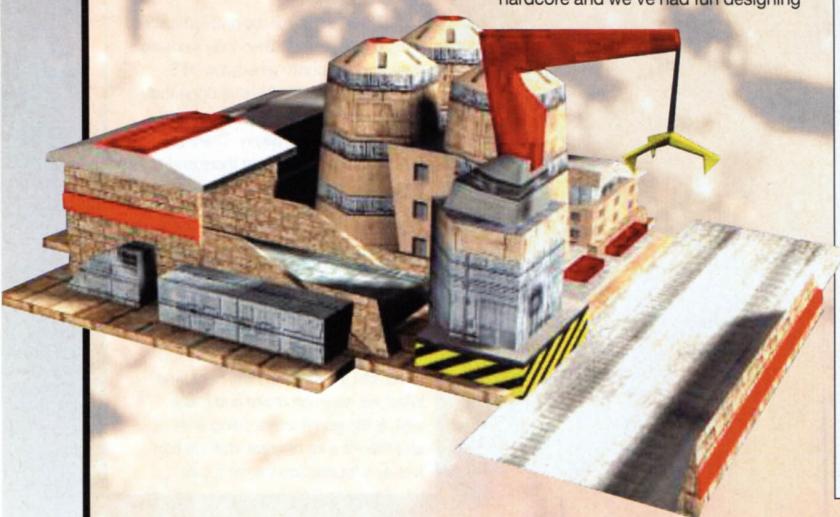
BLOWN AWAY

If you've been following our previous coverage of C&C: Generals or you've seen the movie trailer on this month's

discs, you'll know that one of the most striking things about *Generals* is the graphics, which are simply stunning. The explosions look like they've been taken straight from a film, with realistic physics and miniature showers of debris and flying bodies. The developers have certainly played on this, as well they should, with paused explosions during the in-game cut-scenes that show off the might of the newly created Sage engine

"Our goal is to make a game that is like a Hollywood action war movie that has this feeling of fun"

MARK SKAGGS
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER OF GENERALS



RENDER ME 3D

RTS MAP BUILDING MADE EASY



Some of the Generals maps were made by C&C community members.

One of the aspects *Generals* has decided to focus on more than any other previous C&C title, is the in-game editor, which will allow players to create their own maps and missions via the powerful Sage 3D engine, in a much easier and more comprehensive way. "We had dinner with a group of mod makers just before E3," explains Browder. "This allowed us to get feedback from them about what we can do to make the game very easy for players to modify. We're big fans of mods here and we really want to support the mod community. It's one of the reasons that people buy games these days – so they can monkey around with them."

According to Browder, players will be able to do everything that they've already done with the game, plus a lot more things that the developers themselves haven't even thought about. EA Pacific have also made use of the multitude of C&C fan sites for feedback on the previous games and fans' hopes and desires for *Generals*. They've even employed some of the RA2 mapmakers from the community to create maps for the game, which has helped build a core support group for the game. So convinced are the developers of the potential of their new editor, that they're even releasing it before the game ships early next year.



No honestly, we're a baby milk factory, these are just bottles for... er, 20ft babies.

"We talked about adding emoticons to the game, so there's some way of seeing the emotions of your units"

DUSTIN BROWDER
SENIOR DESIGNER

and 360-degree rotations, that could have come straight out of *Swordfish*.

Generals will also bring the player a greater sense of interaction with the environment, so they don't just feel that they're pushing tanks around on a carpet. Vehicles will leave tracks and push over walls and trees, rather than just rolling through them like they did previously; rangers will drop down onto the top of

buildings to flush out enemy troops. "That kind of realism really appeals," says Skaggs. "It's like little computer people – that's what people love, which is why *The Sims* does so well."

AI TO AI

The C&C games have been criticised in the past for repetitive scripting. In gameplay terms, this meant that if you



The Chinese like using fire as a weapon, particularly with these dragon tanks.

worked out the pattern the enemy units would follow, you could frequently beat them with ease. This is something that EA Pacific is trying to address in *Generals*, along with creating a generally more realistic style of play. "As a player, you're going to see the 'behaviour' of the AI," explains Skaggs. "You're not going to care how many brain cycles a second it has, so we're focusing on what the player sees. We're putting in special script triggers so it will do certain visual things to counter-attack you. That's really more about taking our designers' and our own players' experiences and coding it into the game to make it feel like you're playing a real person."

But as usual there will be the inimitable C&C detail, according to *Generals'* senior



Although there are day and night missions there won't be a cycle.

designer Dustin Browder: "We talked about adding emoticons to the game, so there's some way of seeing the emotions of your units. So, if a unit uncloaks nearby, your soldier will have some kind of 'Wow a stealth unit has just appeared!' reaction. We thought about having little bubbles above their heads so you can see what they're talking about, like guns or food. So you'll see a couple sentries and it'll be like 'Hell yeah, guns!' or 'Let's go and get some food.' But that would purely be for a solo experience." Could we possibly have 'The Sims Go To War' on our hands here?

BRAND NEW TOYS

Despite the gameplay being more serious than the previous C&C titles from EA Pacific, there is a definite sense of fun imbued in every unit, of which there are 12 per side. But that's not including the upgrades, which can affect multiple units and actually seem to be much more consistently important to your army. Each unit also has a various number of functions and even some of the most basic units, such as the USA's ranger, can become very powerful when upgraded. For instance, rangers can land on buildings, clear them of enemy troops and capture them, or use their flashbang grenades to stun enemies and take them off to the American detention camp which powers that particular side's demoralisation weapon.

The Chinese and GLA can also take enemy units prisoner. The GLA use tranquiliser darts to knock out enemy



While none of the missions are taken directly from real life, there's a definite sense of familiarity about some of them.

THE DIGITAL BATTLEFIELD**FUTURISTIC BATTLE TACTICS**

In the future all C&C soldiers could be like the Terminator.

One feature that Mark Skaggs hopes will get featured in *Generals* is the idea of a digital battlefield. "What's happening in the military right now is they're putting a lot of effort into HUDs, which are little computers that go in front of pilot's or soldier's eyes and give them digital readouts about the battlefield,"

he explains. "It's a field of military science called augmented reality display, a bit like a Terminator eye camera that analyses threats. It would be used as a command centre view, but we're still not sure what it would bring to the gameplay and obviously it wouldn't be appropriate for every side."

soldiers and special snipers that can fire through armour to kill tank drivers and capture their vehicles. The Chinese opt for rubber bullets and take their prisoners of war back to their propaganda centre where they are brainwashed until they turn into Chinese units.

Even the buildings have unique attributes. For example, the Americans fill theirs up with rangers that spill out of them when the building is destroyed, and the Chinese have mines all around their base building, so approaching them is potentially lethal. But perhaps the most interesting, is the sub-basements of the GLA, which allow a building to rebuild itself from the basement up if only the main part of it is destroyed. This is something that will undoubtedly come in handy during some of the more powerful strike attacks.

BIG MEN OF C&C

But on the chessboard of the C&C: *Generals* battlefield, the kings are the Generals themselves. Every side has a choice of three Generals at the start of each mission, each of which gives their side various benefits, upgrades and unique units, rather like the sub-races you could ally with in *Emperor: Battle For Dune*. Since in multiplayer you'll never quite know which General your opponent has chosen, you won't know what units to defend against until they're actually blasting down your doors. And like a king, when their command centre is destroyed, they are very weak, with only a pistol to defend them.

America's Generals specialise in tanks and air attacks, while wielding super-



EA Pacific has tried to make the three sides as diverse as possible.



There are only a few naval units in *Generals*, these landing craft are one of them.



This is *Command & Conquer*, but not as we know it.

"The FMVs were a bit long in the tooth. We want to make great games, not great games mixed with bad TV shows!"

DUSTIN BROWDER
SENIOR DESIGNER

weapons such as the Daisy Cutter bomb. The top brass in the GLA train up their units to veteran level much quicker and turn them into superior guerilla fighters. They can also be a dab hand at biological warfare too. But it's the Chinese Generals who seem to be the most interesting from what we've seen so far, with things like a Hacker General that gives units the ability to disrupt enemy communications or buildings. They also have a Warlord General who gives the Chinese tanks a horde bonus, making them an incredibly powerful siege force when kept together.

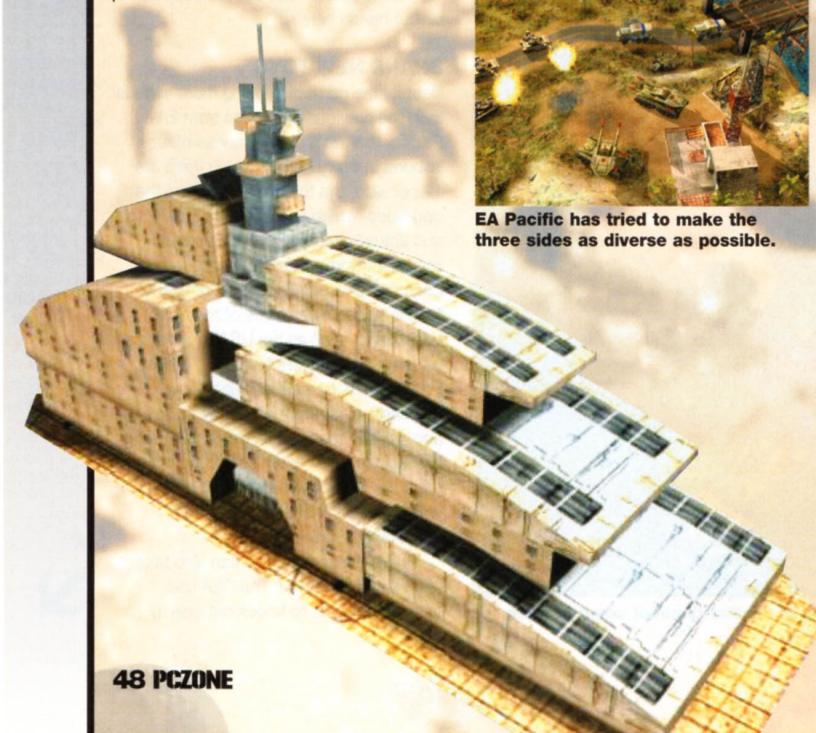
FAREWELL FMVS

Gone are the days of FMVs played out after every C&C mission. No more electric shock-haired Einstein, no more Boris and the tenacious 'see how far I can bend forward' Tanya. "We felt they were

getting a bit long in the tooth. A little been there, done that," explains Browder. "A lot of people point to it in C&C as one of the things they don't like. We didn't think that style would fit in with what we're trying to do. We want to make great games, not great games mixed with bad TV shows!"

Another familiar part of the Westwood games, that of resource management, has also been revamped for *Generals*. Whether it was spice, tiberian crystals or gold, the *Dune* and C&C games have always been known for their simplistic resource gathering, which has come under some criticism from those who think strategy should be more about warfare than the perpetual harvesting of a common resource.

And it looks as though the developers have listened to them to a certain extent, as they've given each side different ways



"We're putting in special script triggers, so the AI will do visual things to counter-attack you"

MARK SKAGGS
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER OF GENERALS

to gather resources. The USA use helicopters to pick up resources from supply piles and return them to their base, whereas the GLA use people to do the same thing. The Chinese concentrate on hacking the Net for resources. However, supply piles can also be constructed inside your base, so there's less emphasis on protecting the resource areas and more chance for effective walling-in tactics and mass base sieges.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

Generals represents the best of past C&C games, with a conscious effort to return to a more serious style of gameplay, while keeping and improving on the individuality of each side, their unique units and warfare style. It's also the first C&C title to make a genuine bid to evolve the series and the future of strategy games since the original game came out, particularly in terms of graphics and AI. It's not yet clear how well the sides will be balanced or how quickly the community will embrace this new face of C&C, but from what we've seen and played, the results should



This is about as close to a cut-scene as you'll see in C&C: Generals. Farewell Tanya and Boris.

be no less than impressive. Your soul may belong to Jesus but your ass will belong to C&C: *Generals*. **PCZ**



Even the bulldogs in *Generals* will have their own defences.

SMELL THE NAPALM

THE WEAPONS OF WAR



One little nuclear strike can ruin your entire day.

Napalm strikes are just one of the extremely satisfying – not to mention graphically impressive – über-weapons you can unleash on your foes. They're incredibly deadly to anything animal, vegetable or mineral that is unfortunate enough to get caught in their blast radius and leave a ring of blackened trees and burnt out units in their wake.

Other, slightly more subtle weapons include a GLA bomb truck that can disguise itself as any unit in the game and can be sneaked into an enemy's base with a whacking great bomb strapped onto it. Then there's the Chinese

hacker unit, which can hack into vehicles and disrupt their communications, making it impossible for them to move and also cream money off the Internet to fund their war effort. They also have an Overlord tank, which is so big it can actually carry a base defence unit, such as a bunker or defence turret, on its back.

The human siege unit, dubbed the angry mob, is another of the GLA's weapons, and is made up of lots of pissed-off individuals who vent their frustrations on any enemy unit or building that gets in their way. The longer you have them, the bigger they grow in number, and they can be upgraded to carry Molotov cocktails and AK47s.





The game opens in 1960s Japan where Cate must outwit a clan of female ninjas.

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Monolith
PUBLISHER VU Games
WEBSITE www.lith.com
OUT Christmas 2002

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Very humorous
- Breathtaking enemy AI
- Bizarre and original enemies and gadgets
- Can improve skills as you play

Live a little, live a lot...

NO ONE LIVES FOREVER 2

Keith Pullin lives in the hope that this could be the shooter for him



CV

MONOLITH

MONOLITH
Based in Washington, USA, Monolith's contribution to the FPS genre has been substantial. Here are the highlights...

1998 Shogo: Mobile Armor Division: This big robot shooter met with a mixed response. A very ambitious and ultimately playable game.

1998 Blood 2: The Chosen: Again, this one didn't go down well in all quarters, but it had its fans – some of whom work on this magazine...

1999 Aliens Vs Predator: without doubt the best ever use of the Aliens and Predator licences in a videogame. Also happened to be one of the scariest FPSs ever made.

2001 No One Lives Forever: This game didn't do well in the UK, but made up for it in the States where it was hugely popular. Maybe it was Cate's English accent?

2001 Aliens Vs Predator 2: A superb follow-up to the original scary monster.

FIRST-PERSON

shooters. They're all the same. You jump out on some poor unsuspecting terrorist/alien/Nazi. You shoot their beard/mandibles/helmet off, and then you do it again, and again, and again. Level after level this curious loop continues until eventually you reach the grand finale – the spectacular climax.

Here you find somebody who's slightly bigger, quicker and smarter than the scum you've just carved your way through. You're worried for a while, but you needn't be. After a little tentative probing, you discover that this evil bucket of filth you've doggedly tracked down over mountains, deserts and probably galaxies, can be killed in exactly the same way as everybody else, albeit with a slightly bigger gun and a few more bullets.

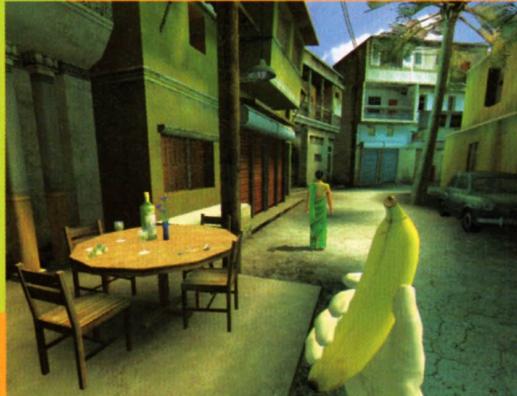
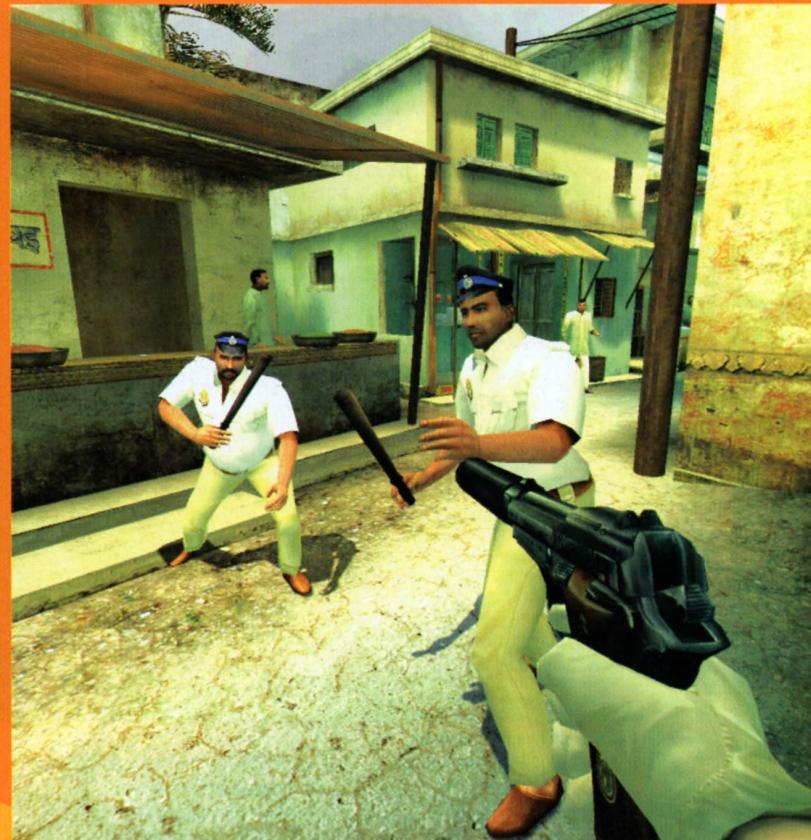
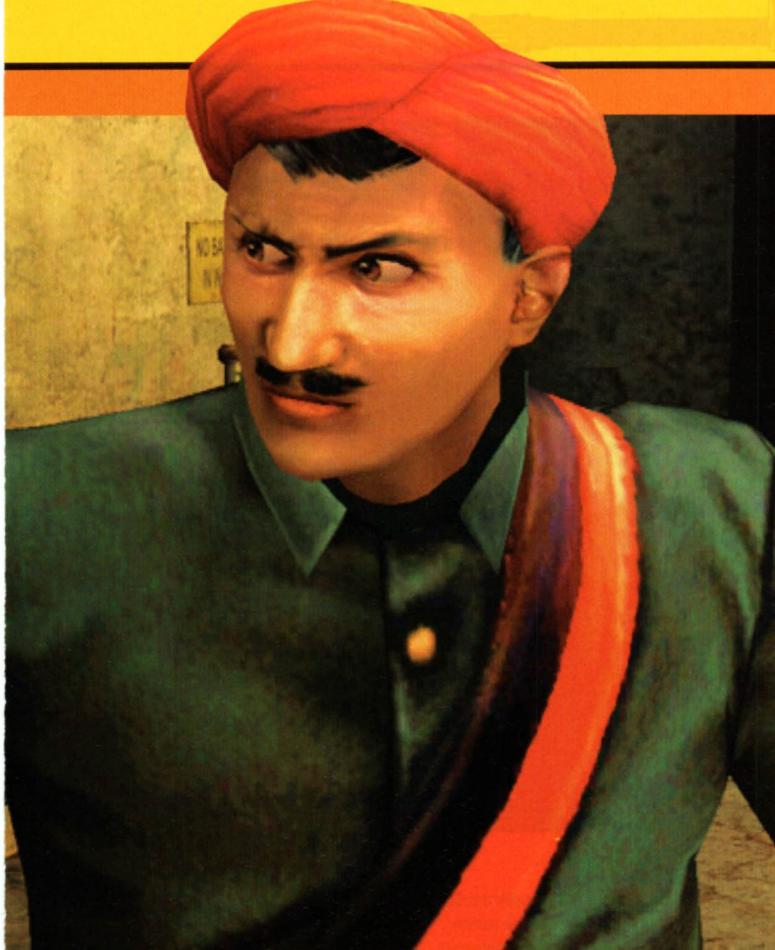
Once again you've just wasted an ample chunk of your life – and for what? A monster list of credits that makes a Hollywood blockbuster film look like a

cheap college production. Just name an FPS that hasn't been an anti-climax – go on... You can't can you?

DEAD AND BURIED

At this point you might be wondering why this reporter, a fervent RTS and RPG fan and apparent FPS critic is about to get all worked up and excited about what is after all an FPS. Well, it's simple. *NOLF 2* is funny. It's also clever, innovative and has lots of stupid gadgets to play with – but mainly it's damn funny, and humour in a game is a rare commodity. OK, the original *NOLF* tried its hand at comedy and effectively died on stage, but things have changed since then. The scriptwriters at Monolith must have had their sense of humour krypton-tuned because this time it works.

Keeping faith with the original team for the sequel has paid dividends. For a start, the team knows from feedback which gags worked and which ones didn't. So,



Full of potassium and deadly in the right hands.



Cartwheel your way out of this one.

at the beginning of the *NOLF 2* project they armed themselves with the crucial information, barricaded themselves in the boardroom and then proceeded to throw strange ideas at each other. As a general rule of thumb, the more ridiculous the idea, the more likely it was to get into the final script.

Consequently, *NOLF 2* is more tongue-in-cheek and surreal than ever. "There's no repetition of humour in the second game," claims Serena Churchill, Monolith's PR manager. "It'll be a similar tone, but even better. We're going to the next level."

BANANA POWER

The level in question seems to be the same place in which Mike Myers is currently residing, because there's a distinct Austin Powers vibe to *NOLF 2*. "We definitely wanted to make it a '60s kind of spy game," says producer Aaron Blean. "If you've ever seen some of the

original '60s spy films with their campy humour, then you'll know what we're trying to achieve with *NOLF 2*."

The James Bond influence is also very much in evidence and the resulting mix of Austin Powers, James Bond and *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.* has evolved into a game bursting with surreal set pieces, bizarre characters, original gadgets and pure slapstick. Take the banana, for example. If you throw this onto the ground in front of a door, the thugs that emerge slip on the offending fruit allowing you to run up and pump them full of bullets while they're still flailing. Gizmos more associated with Q rather than *Banana Splits* include a rather deadly purse (you'll know why females never let go of their handbags when you see this baby in action), laughing gas and an angry robotic kitten.

The freakish cast of characters includes French mime artists who feel their way along invisible walls and then open fire with tommy guns, as well as

"The freakish cast of characters includes French mime artists who feel their way along invisible walls"



Young man, there's a place you can go.

Q&A

CHRIS MILLER



Chris Miller, the producer of *NOLF 2*, on what it means to live forever...

PCZ What are the main gameplay differences between *NOLF 2* and the original?

CHRIS There are too many to list but if I had to say one thing, it would probably be the greater emphasis on stealth. You'll need to search bodies for ammo and additional weapons as well as find hiding spots. The AI is so dynamic that no scene will play exactly the same. Guards can leave their posts and go for a walk, or go to the bathroom. Then there are the new weapons, new enemies and of course a whole new adventure.

PCZ Do you think the humour in *NOLF 2* is something other FPSs lack?

CHRIS I don't know if I'd say they lack it, I just don't think it suits every FPS. I think it works for the *NOLF* universe because of the unique world and characters and the excellent writing, which is something not everyone can pull off.

PCZ Do you think there should be a new genre - the comedy FPS?

CHRIS I don't know if I'd go that far.

PCZ The game is full of amusing cinematic references. What are some of the films that inspired the team?

CHRIS The list is simply too long! Spy films from the '60s and '70s mostly.



"It's clever, innovative and has lots of stupid gadgets to play with, but mainly it's damn funny"

The alleys and rooftops of Calcutta provide plenty of stealth opportunities.

superb roof-top hopping ninjas who literally fly at you from all directions.

TWEETY PIE

As in the first game, *NOLF 2* is based around sultry Cate Archer's personal crusade to thwart a criminal organisation, which goes by the name of H.A.R.M. Needless to say their boss wants the sexy über-spy dead, and will stop at nothing to ensure she makes her way six feet under as rapidly as possible.

Monolith's impressive new Littech Jupiter engine is powering the show, so graphically you can expect the story to unfold with a spectacular array of frills

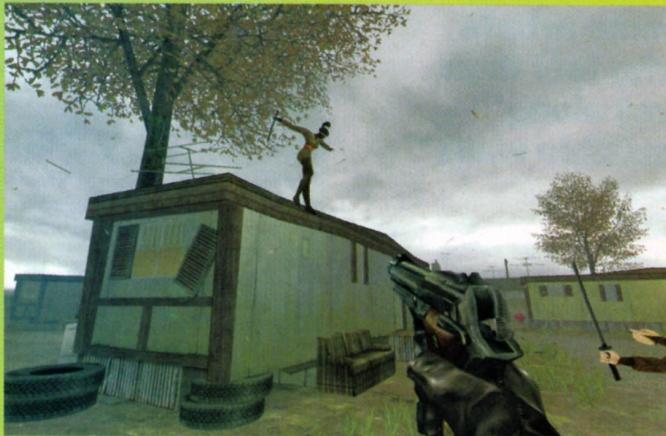
and spills. The animation in particular is ultra-smooth, and boasts an excruciatingly painful-looking 'falling down stairs after being shot' routine.

The extraordinary backgrounds are also a major focal point of the game. One dramatic landscape features a tornado hitting a trailer park in Ohio with caravans and trailers twisting through the air and crushing H.A.R.M. henchmen. In contrast, the tranquil opening level set amid the scenic Japanese gardens of a large mansion is also highly atmospheric. Doubling up as a tutorial, this level allows Cate to feel her way back into the action, while a weird sort of mechanical bird tweets friendly words of encouragement.

TRAILER PARK TRASH

BE CAREFUL WHERE YOU BOOK YOUR HOLIDAY...

Ohio is not the place to go for a caravan holiday. The type of clientele who book the less than homely static caravans are prone to throwing knives at you, jumping on you and generally causing no end of grief for the casual holiday-maker. Of course, once you've learnt how to pacify the white-trash rednecks, you've got the ninjas to deal with. Bloody last-minute package deals.



Not the most exotic location you'll visit in the game.

FULL FRONTAL

Monolith also claims to have implemented a sizeable stealth element into the game. Strangely, this was also a boast attributed to the first game which in the end turned out to be, well, a bit hollow. Any attempts at stealth in *NOLF* were short-lived due to the unyielding nature of its full-frontal gameplay. How, then, has Monolith created a proper stealth style of gameplay for its successor?

"*NOLF 2* features a goal-based system that is truly dynamic," explains Chris Miller, another of *NOLF 2*'s gaggle of producers. "The enemy AI is aware of their environments, such as the states of doors and lights for example. If the player enters a dark room, then turns on the light, the next time a guard enters that room he's likely to notice that the light is now on. At that point he can choose to ignore that fact, go and see why the light is on, or simply turn it off. In *NOLF 2* the player will need to be more aware of their

environment, too. If you bump into things, the AI will hear these noises and become suspicious."

Sure enough, Chris soon came to a point at which Cate was sneaking between some Pagodas, when she accidentally nudged a wind chime. Guards soon poured out of a nearby door, and before we knew it, poor Cate was an ex-spy. So, like *Thief* and *Metal Gear Solid*, *NOLF 2* is a game you'll need to play with your eyes and ears.

BACK AND FORTH

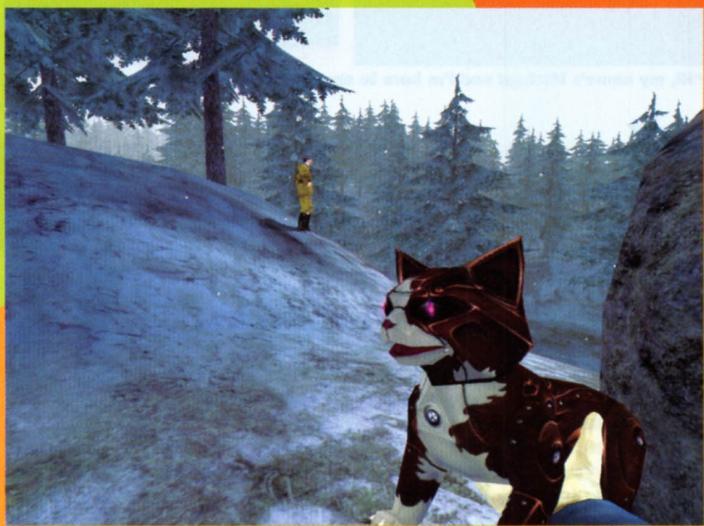
Another of *NOLF*'s controversial traits was its linearity. If ever a game promoted the run, shoot, run, shoot aspect of FPSs it was *NOLF*. Again, we're assured that this time things are different: "*NOLF 2* has several fully traversable levels that a player will need to move back and forth between to complete objectives," explains Miller. "Also, with the additional AI changes, the linearity of *NOLF* has



Cate is no match for a ninja when it comes to hand-to-hand combat.



A truly shocking experience.



Far less trouble than your average household cat.

been significantly reduced. However, we still need to keep the player moving forward and advance the story, so it's not all gone."

And there is one final element to the gameplay that should also give *NOLF 2* that final boost towards being something considerably more than just another FPS. With each objective that you complete you are given points to increase Cate's skills. In other words you can increase attributes such as stealth, stamina and marksmanship as you progress through the game. So a little bit like an RPG too? Well,

it's not exactly *Morrowind*, but it makes a change, and it's certainly something extra to think about while you're running around dropping bananas.

NOLF 2 is out in October, and that means it's the first of the new breed of game to hit your screens. We're going to have the exclusive review and demo next issue, so we'll see if it succeeds where the original tried and ultimately failed. **[PC]**

"With each objective you complete you are given points to increase Cate's skill"

SILENT NIGHT

GO IN ALL GUNS BLAZING AND YOU'LL GO HOME IN A BOX

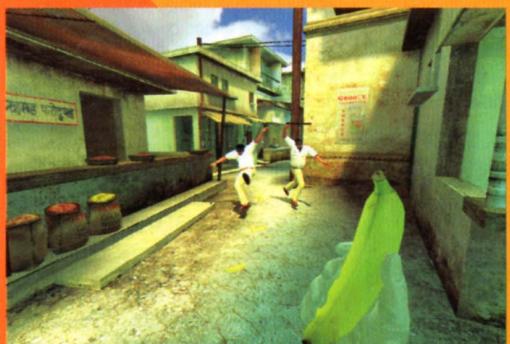
More stealth-based than ever, *NOLF 2* will test your subtlety to the limit. Cate Archer is armed with a selection of gadgets to enable her to move silently between her enemies. Some levels are geared towards nothing but stealth, which means that if you try to blast your way through you'll surely end up a cropper. So be smart, use the selection of high-tech gizmos and more traditional assassin gear to creep up behind your enemies and put them soundlessly asleep, forever.



One well-placed shot with a shuriken can do the same job as a dozen bullets – and it's a lot quieter. Shuriken only tend to work when the enemy hasn't seen you though, so use them at the right time.



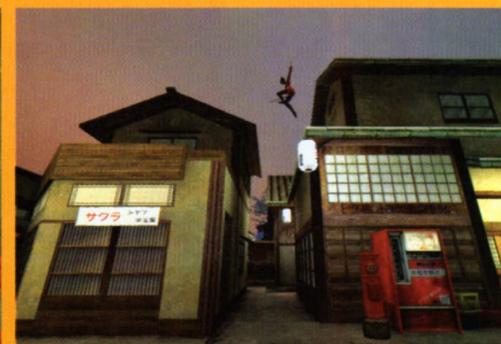
The Taser gun puts enemies out of commission for a while, but they will eventually wake up. Make sure you're far enough away when they do come around, 'cos they're gonna be pissed.



Expect some classic British slapstick.



Cheer up, it might never happen.



When I were a lad we used to jump fences.



"May the light of the Lord shine upon thee in the hour of passing..."



"Hi, my name's Michael and I'm here to spread the good news."

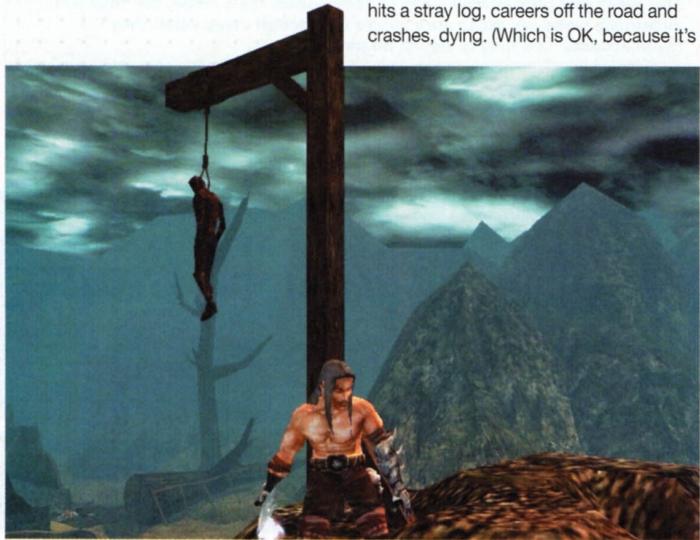
THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Metropolis Software
PUBLISHER JoWooD
WEBSITE www.archangel-online.com
OUT October 18

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- It's an action/RPG hybrid with plenty of fast-paced combat
- Your quest spans three vastly different epochs, each offering its own arsenal of deadly hardware
- Intelligent enemies should stretch your tactical nous
- You're an angel, not a saint

"The Lord Of Light gives you a big, glowing sword and a licence to smite"



"Right, this guy stole from the collection plate - who else wants hanging?"

Angel of attack...

ARCHANGEL

Kicking ass for the Lord... Your spiritual guide: **Anthony Holden**

LIKE IT OR not, we all have to die sooner or later. For some of us, this signifies an absolute finality, the inevitable snuffing out of a fragile and largely wasted existence; for others, there is the promise of eternal paradise and/or damnation. Michael Travinsky, hero of forthcoming action RPG *Archangel*, has a different idea – how about returning to life as a vicious, homicidal warrior out to slaughter as many servants of darkness as he can lay his blood-soaked hands on? All in the name of the Lord of course.

It all starts one cold, dark night in the mountains of Poland. There he is, driving along a snowy road in his piece-of-shit car, hair down to his arse-crack, when he hits a stray log, careers off the road and crashes, dying. (Which is OK, because it's

the only career he was ever likely to have anyway.) After a bit of wandering around and being drawn towards a mysterious light, he wakes up in a dank cell, completely unhurt. He's also travelled back in time to the fantasy-rich, pseudo-Dark Ages setting of the 'Old Age'. Never mind though – a quick chat with God and he's off on a grand quest: to restore the balance of good and evil and become the Archangel, Warrior Of Light. It's kind of like *The Crow* meets John Travolta's *Michael*.

ARMED AND GODLY

However, before we get struck down by the church for supporting another evil, blasphemous game, we should point out that the God in question is not any of the existing Gods, but a new, freshly invented one. He's called the Lord Of Light, and though he doesn't have many followers yet, this could change with the release of *Archangel*, as he's clearly quite a cool God. For a start, instead of giving you a harp and asking you to join the celestial choir when you buy it, The Lord Of Light gives you a big, glowing sword and a licence to smite. As you travel through the

game's three epochs (the others being a ruined, futuristic Berlin and the hell-like City Of Evil) you can supplement these basics with everything from crossbows to heat-seeking rockets.

While a loose RPG structure means that the game is based around quests and exploration, the combat is very much action-based. Nodding its head to the likes of *Soul Reaver 2* and *Zelda 64* (right down to magical fire and ice arrows), the action is quick and focused, though the developers are also trying to push the strategic side of things. This means you'll have to apply your various special abilities carefully and exploit an enemy's weak points to the fullest – you'll have to think a bit, basically. There are also two character classes to choose from – Ghost and Warrior – each with their own skills and strategic advantages.

VENGEANCE MOST HOLY

At this stage *Archangel* is looking like a fairly well-balanced brew. It's heavy on the action, but the RPG influence is far from token, with plenty of emphasis on developing the character of Michael as he slowly transforms into the Archangel. Due attention is also being given to the AI to ensure that enemies can communicate what they see and hear to each other, and work together in groups to bring you to your knees.

Last time we looked, the game was very nearly complete, and we should have a review for you next issue. Until then, go in peace to love and serve the Lord. Just go easy on the holy wrath. **PCZ**



The War is far from over

"Glorious visuals, superbly designed missions
and breathtaking combat" *PC Gameplay*

8/10 **C&VG**
8/10 **PC Gameplay**



The war continues with a vengeance. Now in Sudden Strike II, there is even more action thanks to the realistic battles, accurate vehicles & troops and extended controllability. The world is just one huge battlefield - in the air, on land, and now even at sea.

Anyone who plays Sudden Strike II will soon know what it's all about:
Strategy, tactics, timing, guile and ultimately... winning!

Features:

- 5 nations: America, Germany, Great Britain, Russia and, for the first time, Japan
- 5 powerful campaigns with more than 40 breathtaking missions
- fascinating multiplayer mode



For further information please see our website: WWW.SUDDENSTRIKE2.COM



This is why I never come south of the river...



Say what you want about the apocalypse, it sure does make for a nice sunset.

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER GRIN
PUBLISHER TBC
WEBSITE www.bandits-game.com
OUT December

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Go-anywhere shoot 'em up action on four wheels
- Good mission variety
- Loads of vehicles and weapon upgrades
- Head-to-head and team-based multiplayer

Beyond thunderdome...**BANDITS:
PHOENIX RISING**

In the future, cities will become deserts, roads will become battlefields, and gangs will rule the highway. Anthony Holden checks his travel insurance

AS A RULE, Aussie films are crap. I can say that, because I'm from Australia, and I've been forced to sit through more Aussie films than you. They're always about delightfully quirky small-town characters or drag queens with hearts of gold and they only appeal to an international audience because the accents are funny (and you know they

exaggerate those for your benefit too, mate). The only possible exception that springs to mind is *Mad Max*.

Not only a classic of its era, *Mad Max* and its sequel (the one without Tina Turner) have also spawned a whole genre of post-apocalyptic imitators, from *Spacehunter: Adventures in the Forbidden Zone* and *Cherry 2000* through almost every film directed by Kevin Costner. Nowhere is this tradition more alive than in the realm of videogames, where we have thrived to the roar of scrap-metal road hogs since before the beginning of time. *Twisted Metal*, *Vigilante 8*, *Smuggler's Run*... the list is long and dignified, but for some reason almost exclusively console-driven.

ROAD WARRIOR

But fear not, as this oversight is about to be rectified with the impending arrival of *Bandits: Phoenix Rising*, a *Mad Max*-style driving game made just for PC, and making use of all the latest advances in graphics chip technology. It's the latest game from our friends at GRIN, the high-tech Swedish developer that likes its name in all-caps and its games even bigger. Their previous effort, *Ballistics*, brought us the concept of racing inside a drainpipe, which proved to be surprisingly good fun despite the fact that it was essentially just a twist on the *WipEout* formula.

Bandits too follows a well-established precedent. Gangs of unkempt petrol-heads roam a battle-scarred wasteland,

scrapping for resources and reputations in a brutal war on wheels. The fighting takes place in a variety of combat-ready rust buckets, cobbled together from spare parts and bristling with vicious hardware. Shotguns, grenades, nitro boosters – if it goes bang chances are you'll find it in this post-apocalyptic hinterland.

You enter this familiar scene as the leaders of the notorious Wolfpack gang, Fennec and Rewdalf – driver and gunman respectively of the aforementioned death machines. They're on a mission to outgun their foes and steal a fabled treasure from a city stronghold, and just to retain that *Mad Max* vibe, Rewdalf also has a ridiculous accent (though in this case it's Scottish rather than Aussie). Along the way, you'll face an impressive variety of missions ranging from pursuit, duels, train robberies and all-out gang wars. There's also a robust set of multiplayer options, including a promising Teams mode with support for online clans and the promise of a persistent league.

Rather than aiming for any startling innovation, *Bandits* simply hopes to be an entertaining four-wheeled shoot 'em up, and having played the preview build, we reckon it could just do the trick.

We've also strong-armed the developers into giving you a playable demo of the game on this month's cover discs, so check it out if you haven't already. It's only a small taster of what's to come, and shows nothing of the snow- and grass-based levels, but it should whet your appetite for a bit of good old-fashioned, post-apocalyptic destruction. □

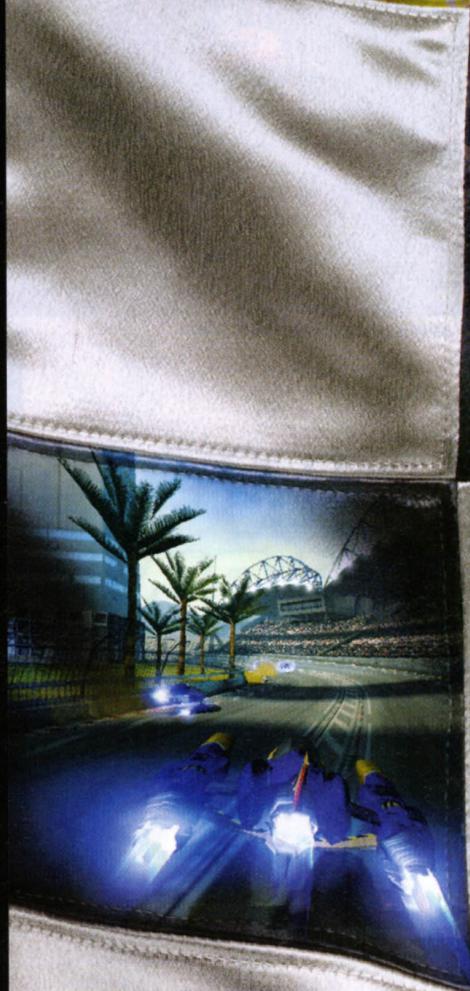
"If it goes bang chances are you'll find it in this post-apocalyptic hinterland"



Environments are a bit sparse, but the pay-off is that they're fully deformable.



IT'S NOT ENOUGH
TO WIN.
EVERYONE ELSE MUST LOSE,
MISERABLY.



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The future of motorsport may not be pretty, but it's certainly fun. Race to exclusive JXL tracks or rip your own to the Xbox™ hard disc. Whatever gets you psyched. At over 900 mph, you're going to need all the help you can get.

Quantum Redshift

Another great game only available on Xbox.



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"And how exactly am I going to fit through that door?"



A little person upsets a big spider – bad move.

Wield the power...

THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Surreal Software
PUBLISHER VU Games
WEBSITE www.surreal.com
OUT September 2002

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Based on the book which is a whole lot better than the film
- Three controllable characters
- Three computer-controlled henchmen
- You get to fight the Balrog – scary!

From Hampshire to The Shire, Keith Pullin seeks the One Ring

LET THE battle commence. In the red corner we have Electronic Arts and numerous games based on Peter Jackson's series of films, although according to our information they may never see the light of day on the PC. In the blue corner we have Vivendi and its game of Tolkien's literary masterpiece. These two publishing giants are about to stand toe to toe in a battle that's likely to be unrivalled in the annals of marketing misinformation and propaganda. First up, Vivendi and its book-based effort.

PIPING HOT

As far as Surreal Software, the developers of Vivendi's game, are concerned, a game based on the book, the whole book, and nothing but the book far outweighs any

game based on a bastardised version of Tolkien's original work. "By using the book as a base you have a lot more freedom," claims Alan Patmore, president of Surreal. "You can include characters such as Tom Bombadil and things that are alluded to by Tolkien. Don't get me wrong, EA's game looks great, but from a development standpoint it's detail that will differentiate our game from theirs."

And detailed it most certainly is. As far as third-person action games go, *LOTR: The Fellowship Of The Ring* is looking like it might be worth sacrificing a night down the cinema for. Surreal has focused upon creating different styles of play depending on which of the main three characters you control. If you want to see Gandalf throwing a few lightning bolts around and banging his staff on the ground, you will not be disappointed. If you want to see Aragorn slicing open Orcs and Wargs, then happy as a Hobbit with a big bag of pipeweed you shall be.

CV

SURREAL
SOFTWARE

SURREAL SOFTWARE

Strange name, stranger games. Here's the short and sweet story so far...

1999 Surreal releases its first game called *Drakan: Order Of The Flame*. Not bad if flying dragons is your thing.

2001 Work commences on *Lord Of The Rings* for the PC and PS2.

2002 *Drakan: The Ancients' Gates*, the follow-up to *Drakan* is released for the PS2 only.

2002 Electronic Arts announces it has the licence for the *LOTR* games based on the film. Surreal groans.

"EA's game looks great, but it's detail that will differentiate our game from theirs"

ALAN PATMORE
PRESIDENT OF SURREAL



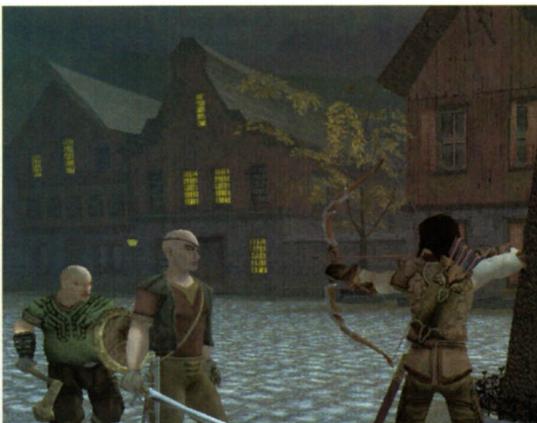
Completion of minor tasks rewards you with minor power-ups.

DEAD RINGER

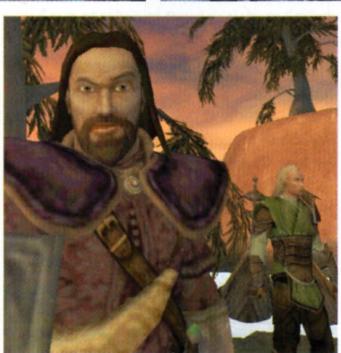
If, however, you want to see Frodo steaming his way through hordes of Nazgul then take a step back... If you've read the book you'll know that Frodo



The council of Elrond selects a winning daffodil for the Rivendell flower show.



Frodo goes off in search of his foot hair trimmer.



Bree – but not the soft, creamy kind.

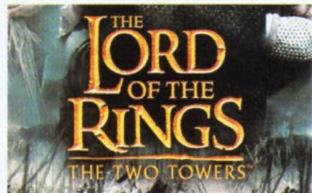


Do not mess with wizards, especially those carrying... a sword? "It's a hill and it's green. It's Greenhill."

runs from virtually every encounter he has. Therefore, in keeping with the whole Middle Earth vibe, Frodo is a stealth character. When you control Frodo the aim is to avoid detection – which is where the

ring comes into play. Frodo can wear the ring to increase his stealth ability. However in doing so he decreases his 'purity' stat. When purity reaches zero the Black Riders catch up with him and it's straight off to Mordor with no second breakfast.

NO COMPETITION?



Has EA canned its PC title?

The Fellowship Of The Ring is based on the book and it was due to go head-to-head with EA's game, *The Two Towers*, which is based on the film. Confused? You might not be for much longer as rumours are flying around that EA has canned its game on the PC. No official announcement has been made, but the game isn't on any release schedules and no denial about its demise has been forthcoming from EA, all of which is great news for Surreal Software.

CHANGING FACES

The character you play is not a straight choice at the beginning of the game either. Each character has their moment of glory, so as you progress the lead character changes. Aragorn leads the way across Weathertop, Gandalf takes charge in Moria, and Frodo does his sneaky stealth stuff in the Old Forest and the Barrow Downs. In total there are 27 levels covering all the chapters of *The Fellowship Of The Ring* with each of the main characters starring in nine levels each.

LOTR: TFOOTR also features computer-controlled non-player characters such as Gimli and Legolas. While not directly under your control these AI fighters will work with you to slaughter all that stand in your way.

Don't expect any multiplayer action though. Although on the surface the whole fellowship concept looks like it could be tailor-made for some kind of co-operative slaying, *LOTR: TFOOTR* is strictly single-player.

BOOK IT NOW

Considering *The Fellowship Of The Ring* is the first part of a trilogy, the chances are that at some point the next two books will be appearing in game form. Being the naturally inquisitive folk that we are here at ZONE, we asked Patmore whether Surreal would be carrying on as a LOTR developer.

"The engine's in place. The characters are being built. The core mechanics are set up. So, make the logical jump..." So, jumping as we are prone to do into future hypothesis, it looks as though Surreal are set to be the ring bearer of this particular licence for a while yet. One thing's for sure anyway; the Eye of ZONE will keep very close tabs on how the ring travels. In the meantime, you'll have to wait until September before you can start fingering your own. **PCZ**

Q&A

ALAN PATMORE



President of Surreal Software and budding white wizard Alan Patmore talks magic.

PCZ Are you annoyed that people will have a choice of *LOTR* games?

ALAN I think there's a big enough space for multiple Tolkien games, just like there's enough space for multiple *Star Wars* games. We'll just have to let the games do the talking.

PCZ Do you think working from the book is an advantage?

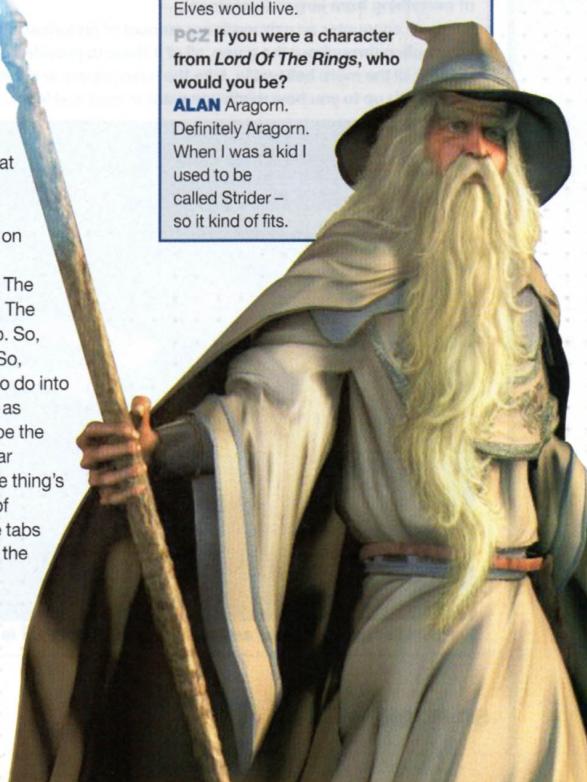
ALAN I think it's a definite advantage. We are not constrained by having to follow the movie. We have the ability to reference anything that Tolkien referenced in those books.

PCZ Has it been difficult to ignore the movie?

ALAN One of the things we've had to be very careful about is not looking like the movie. It's hard because ultimately Tolkien created such a powerful image with his literature; similarities with the movie are inevitable. That said, there is a lot of room for manoeuvre. Our Rivendell for example is nothing like the Rivendell in the movie – it just didn't look like the sort of place Elves would live.

PCZ If you were a character from *Lord Of The Rings*, who would you be?

ALAN Aragorn. Definitely Aragorn. When I was a kid I used to be called Strider – so it kind of fits.



In the thicket of the action

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Pterodon

PUBLISHER Take 2

WEBSITE www.pterodon.cz

OUT End of the year

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- It's the first big shooter to be set in Vietnam
- Team-based action that manages to be both tactical and supremely intense
- Incredible amount of detail in every conceivable aspect

CV



PTERODON

It might be named after a dinosaur, but this Czech company is still pretty young. Fellow Czech developer Illusion Softworks provides financial support and takes care of the business end for *Vietcong*, while Pterodon concentrates on developing.

1998 Pterodon is founded and soon comes under the wing of Illusion Softworks

2000 *Flying Heroes* is released. Dragonriding first-person deathmatching might be original but not very successful. Work begins on *Vietcong*.

2002 After two years in development, *Vietcong* is announced.

VIETCONG

Charlie at five o'clock. Mark Hill serves green tea

THERE'S a combat situation that is imprinted in all our minds and yet has never been fully realised in a game. It involves you standing with a group of soldiers in the middle of a dense, mosquito-infested jungle, knee-deep in muddy water that steams slowly from the stifling heat, and pointing your weapon at every tiny flutter of leaves, every insignificant creak of wood, with a wild look in your eyes that steadily loses focus thanks to the trickle of sweat soaking through your bandana.

Of course you've seen the scene in any of those Nam war films you grew up watching, but they were there to tell us war is hell, not a WWII *Dirty Dozen* adventure. That's all about to change though, because a European company, free of the guilt that still haunts Americans, is here to show us that it's about time we enjoyed the Vietnam War. And from what I've seen of this beauty so far, we're all going to have flashbacks for some time to come.

WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE

It's important to realise right from the start that this – unlike so many Vietnam films –

isn't about the countless kids who went through hell and came back in body bags or straight jackets. You're part of a group of Special Forces on the Cambodian border in 1967 on a six month tour of duty, about to penetrate a jungle full of life as well as death, and you'll need every single member of your team in order to survive.

One of the most important members is your point man, a Montanyard (a Vietnamese hill tribe) who acts as your trap-spotters and guide through the jungle. Try to set off without him and you'd soon be lost. Then you have a medic, who will heal you and other team members, the engineer, who handily carries an inexhaustible supply of ammo, the machine gunner and the radio carrier, whose backpack you'll be seeing a lot of.

Giving orders is very simple and context-sensitive, so you don't have to mess about with menus and submenus just to get the boys to move out. And, although this is a shooter where you'll personally be in the line of fire all the time, it's also very much a team game where the death of any one of your squad means game over.

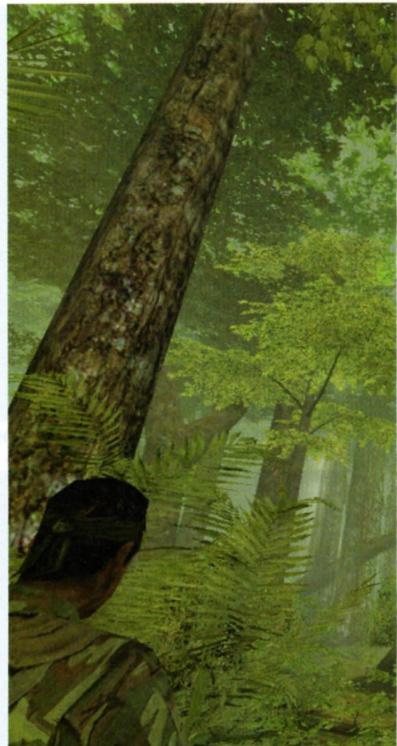
There's no plot as such, more a string of events organised across incredibly varied missions. But the lack of proper storyline doesn't mean it hasn't got a cinematic feel. From the sound of rock 'n' roll playing from descending choppers to the many *Half-Life*-like heart-in-mouth scripted moments, this is a truly spectacular experience.

CHARLIE DON'T SURF!

You start each mission being debriefed by a superior, inspecting maps and browsing documents. We're not sure what music will be licensed for use in-game, but we reckon '60s tunes are essential to convey that Vietnam movie feeling.

The missions look fantastic with tons of variation and they include heading up-river on a boat to rescue a downed pilot, with fire coming from both flanks, and helping out a local villager about to have a baby. A bit different to the kind of 'help' most of the US army apparently offered Vietnamese civilians. Most of the time though, you'll be sent on recon missions and strategic attacks against the enemy.

When a game has been more than two years in development and is looking this good, you know it's not going to be just another item on the seasonal production line. Pterodon has been able to use this time to test loads of features, keeping the ones that worked and discarding the ones that didn't, as well as continuing to refine and improve every little aspect of the gameplay. This philosophy extends to the multiplayer game as they will be releasing a beta demo any day now in order to give



The jungle looks amazing, full of animal life and plants and water you want to reach out and touch.



Burning villages. Nice.

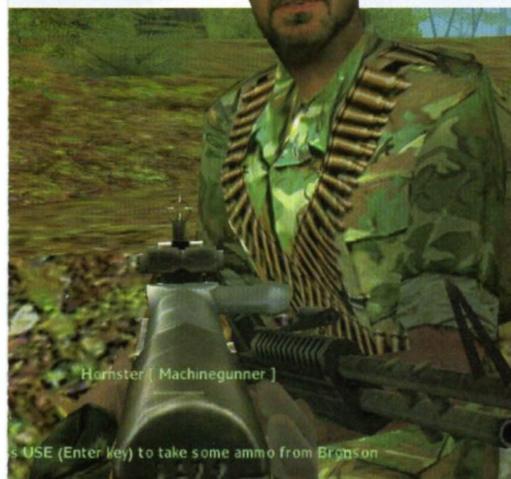
the finished version the benefit of tried and tested public feedback. And yes, you can play on the VC side.

LOVE YOU LONG TIME

It's impossible to convey in this short space just how right *Vietcong* looks and feels, how impressive the graphics and the myriad details are, and the intensity of the



From household items to authentic fauna, the detail is incredible.

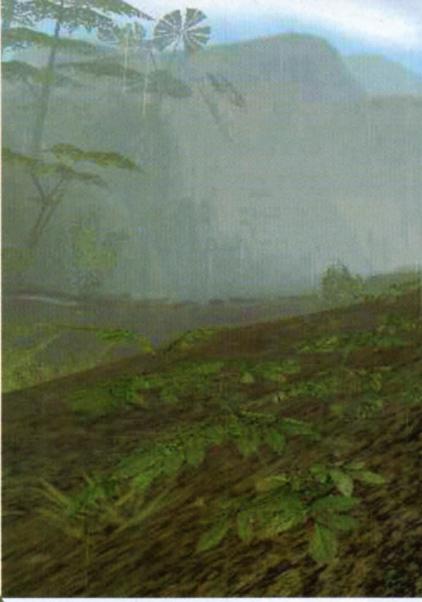


There are roughly 25 levels and more than 20 expertly recreated weapons.

firefights once they break out with surprising loudness through the gentle and ever-present cricket song. I still maintain *Half-Life* hasn't been beaten – not even by *Medal Of Honor* – but if everything in VC falls into place, it's going to firmly push Valve's ageing classic to one side.

So far US veterans have reacted with indifference to the news of the game, and

producer Luke Vernon isn't expecting any controversy when it's launched. "It's not a political game, and it's not taking sides, saying what's right and wrong," he says. "It's just a realistic game with one army fighting another." Well, actually, it's more than that. It's one of the hottest shooters we've seen. And as soon as you try out the multiplayer beta test, you'll know why.



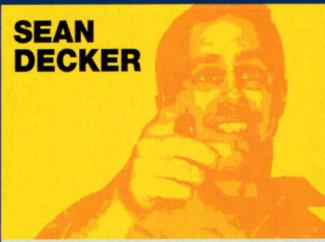
Each weapon has its own recognisable sound, so you can tell where your enemies are, and what they are firing at you just by listening.



When your team detects an enemy they'll appear on your radar screen.

"There's no plot as such, more a string of events organised across incredibly varied missions"



**PROFILE****SEAN DECKER**

DEVELOPER Maxis
POSITION Producer

WHAT GAMES HAVE YOU WORKED ON RECENTLY?

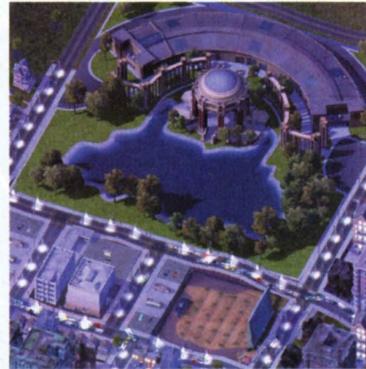
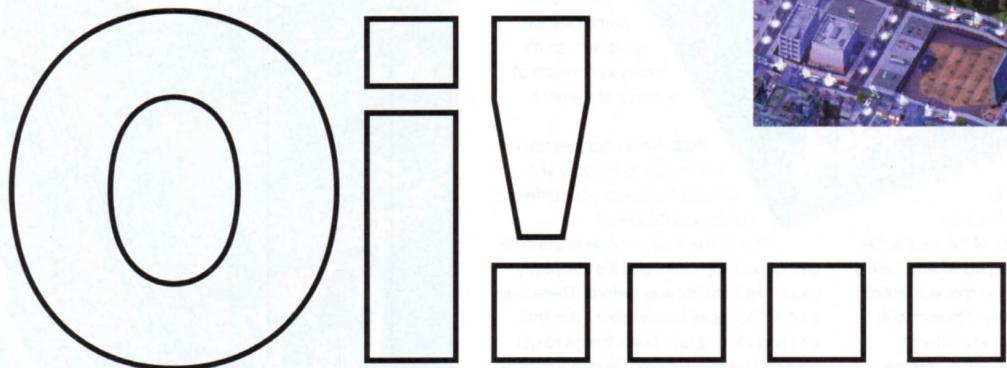
Apart from *SimCity 4* I was also the producer on *C&C: Renegade*.

FAVOURITE GAME?

I'm a huge fan of *Civilization*, I think Sid Meier did a fantastic job on that.

FIRST GAME YOU REALLY PLAYED TO DEATH?

Red Lightning from SSI on the Commodore, and a text-based *Star Trek* game at high school.



DECKER, what's your game?

SIM CITY 4

The ultimate city-builder is back and this time it's in 3D. **Rhianna Pratchett** puts her hard hat on

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Maxis

PUBLISHER EA

WEBSITE <http://simcity.ea.com/>

simcity4/

OUT November 2002

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Fully 3D with four different perspectives and five zoom levels
- Massively improved simulation features such as a full day and night cycle and visual representations of your city's health
- Easy-to-use terrain-forming tools
- More focus on regional city-building and the creation of neighbourhoods
- Allows you to import your characters from *The Sims* into your city for progress reports

CV



MAXIS

This California-based development studio was started by Will Wright and Jeff Braun in 1987. Maxis went on to develop a stream of games with the *Sim* prefix, of which *SimCity* and *The Sims* became the most famous household names.

1989 *SimCity*: This top-down city simulator was like nothing else on the market at the time. It became the inspiration for Sid Meier's *Civilization* as well as getting a full page of coverage in *Time* magazine.

1993 *SimCity 2000*: Kept many of the same features as the original but this time opted for improved isometric graphics. Kept Maxis afloat through a series of not-too-hot titles such as *SimCopter* and *SimIsle*.

2000 *The Sims*: This title along with its five expansion packs (including the latest *Sims Unleashed* due later this year) has sold millions of copies worldwide. The series remains however, for better or worse, snubbed by the hardcore community.

NOBODY thought the writings of American technology professor Jay Forrester on the nature of urban growth and economic fluctuation could be turned into any kind of mass-market entertainment. But Will Wright saw things differently when he created *SimCity* in 1989, through his newly founded development house, Maxis.

The game created out of nowhere the building simulation genre, and since then the *SimCity* franchise has, in terms of popularity at least, remained relatively unchallenged – save for a few tycoon games. Now *SimCity* is set to reinvent itself once more in a fourth incarnation that takes the ultimate city-builder into the world of 3D. PC ZONE caught up with *SimCity* 4 producer Sean Decker, to get the latest on the next word in virtual Lego.

PCZ What would you say are the main differences between this game and previous *SimCity* titles?

SEAN Well we have a brand new engine, which is completely 3D, and you can manipulate the terrain with a single click as opposed to the slow and kind of painful process used before. The level of simulation is totally new and the game is much more responsive to the things the player does. There's lots of visual feedback for the player and obviously there are brand new things too, like being able to move sims from *The Sims* game



Even though this is the closest you can zoom in, there's still loads of detail.

into your neighbourhood. That's something we're quite excited about.

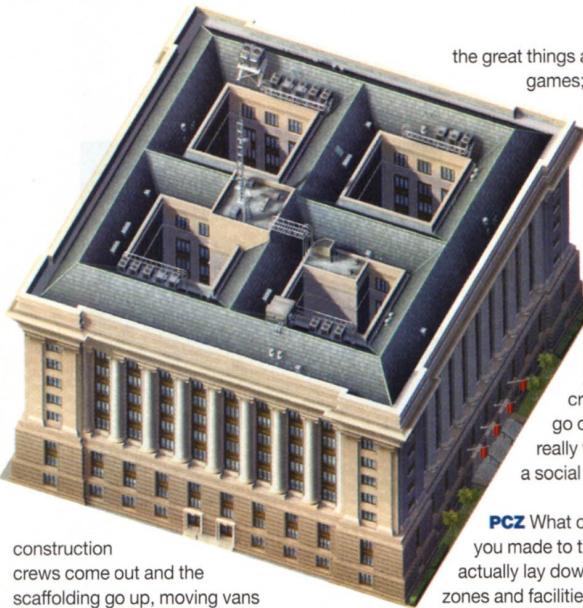
PCZ You seem very proud of the increased simulation aspect – how does it get implemented in the game?

SEAN You'll be able to see it right from the beginning when you start altering the terrain for your city as we've greatly increased the flora and fauna simulation. For example when you go to paint trees on land near water they'll be thick, green and lush, but when you paint them on the

high, arid ground they'll automatically thin out and become scrub brush. Different types of wild animals such as deer and giraffes can also be added and they tend to congregate around the nearest source of water. You also get fireworks shooting up when you first start your city.

PCZ Sounds very picturesque, but how does it kick in when you actually start building your city?

SEAN Before buildings just used to pop up, now they actually grow so you'll see



the great things about Maxis games; you always get these fun and quirky things. You'll need a large police force to suppress the crime but if your people are educated and have jobs then the crime rate will go down, so it's really very much of a social statement.

PCZ construction crews come out and the scaffolding go up, moving vans driving down the streets of the residential areas and smog building up where there's heavy industry. The lots in the residential areas are also completely different with varied vegetation and many different types instead of just the same one over and over again. We're trying to let people know exactly what's going on in a very visual way. Previously you had to look at all these graphs and charts to find out what was happening, now you can just look at the game and have a good impression of what's going on.

Previously *SimCity* didn't have any sense of night or day either, but now we've got three different ways to play it. You can play night on all the time, day on all the time or just let the clock run through the day and night cycle, based on the time your people will commute to work and back again. At night criminals will come out onto the streets and in the morning kids will go to school and play in the playgrounds at break.

PCZ How do you represent problems like crime?

SEAN We've tried to stay away from super-violent crime. You might see a car driving wildly down the street, a guy getting a pie thrown in his face, graffiti springing up on the sides of buildings or a few flashers running around. That's one of

PCZ What changes have you made to the way you actually lay down your different zones and facilities?

SEAN The mayor mode is the core part of building cities and it's still pretty much like *SimCity* was before. There was a lot of the 'geek factor' about it in that you had to do a lot of little things to get your city up and running. Now it's simpler. The smaller roads are even automatically drawn in when you set out your different areas, although they are only low-capacity ones which you will have to upgrade if you want to avoid traffic congestion.

There's four different types of industry which will crop up: dirty manufacturing industries, high-tech industries, chemical industries and farming. The type of industry that appears will depend on the education of your people and how wealthy they are. Uneducated people won't build software or biotech companies, for example. There's also three different styles of building: a late 19th-century red-brick style, a 1940s concrete and steel type and then there's more of a glass and steel-style building like Canary Wharf. As your city grows



Land near water will attract more cloud, and thicker trees.

you can see the different styles coming in as the years pass. So you'll see young neighbourhoods growing up next to older ones.

PCZ Neighbourhoods? So it's not just about creating one giant city then?

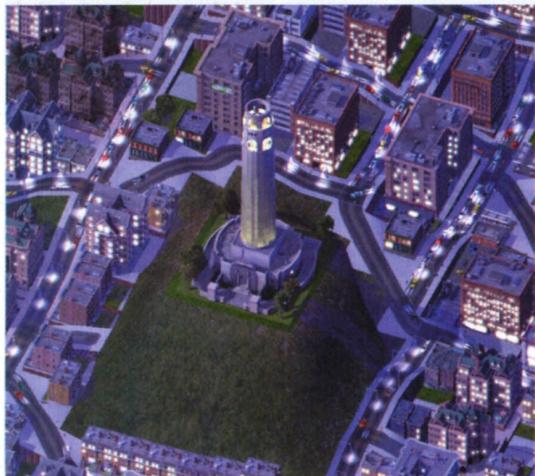
SEAN No, one of the huge differences in *SimCity 4* is the region-based gameplay and the concept of neighbourhoods. In

previous games you didn't really have a kind of neighbourhood simulation. You could put your facilities in one corner of the city and your people would be satisfied. Now you actually have to place them near where your people live and work. Each facility, like a school or fire station, has a ring around it when you first place it, which shows the area of coverage.

We've now got the citywide macro level, but we also have more of a micro level too, where you can get information on different areas in your city by clicking on any building. You can also build different inter-linking regions because your people will now actually commute to different cities. So you can have a nice small town and not have to have a dirty factory near it. Instead you build an industrial and commercial area a little way off that your people will automatically commute to.

PCZ You must have seen plenty of feedback from the other *SimCity* titles. What kind of things did fans want to see in this one?

SEAN We asked a lot of questions before we did this and got answers from a lot of different people. Number one was simulation – things like when you put animals down they should congregate around water or when you put a school down you see kids going to school and coming home again. All these were things that people really wanted. They also asked for visual feedback, meaning you don't need to go to a graph or chart to see there's



At night the streetlights come on and out come the crims.



Industry: not pretty, but you can place it in its own area.

"You can take your customised sim character and move them into your city"

pollution or traffic. Another request was for the ability to be able to create regions with different cities in.

PCZ How will the game be localised? For example, will the cars be driving on the 'wrong' side of the road in the US edition?

SEAN The game is shipping in 17 different languages simultaneously so yes, we have put a few localised assets in there. In the US edition the highway signs are in green, but in the European edition they're blue. We've also got things like roundabouts, which aren't in the American edition.

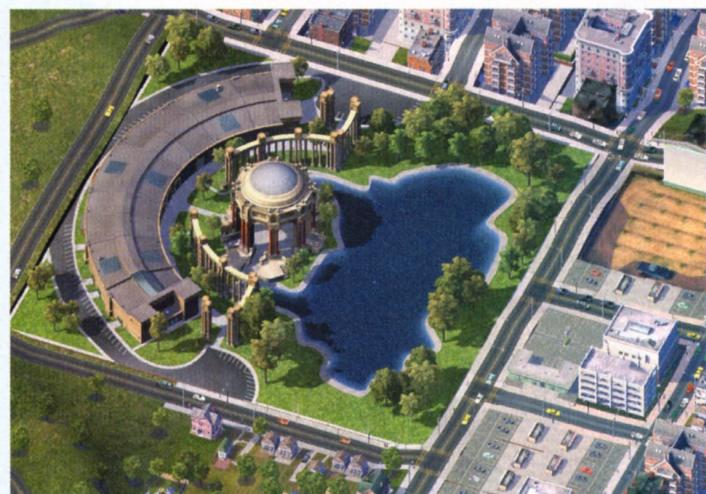
PCZ Why have you chosen to lock the zoom feature rather than having a free-floating camera?

SEAN The 3D aspect has brought so much to the world with all the people on the streets, cars going by and kids playing in pools. But in order for us to allow these things to happen on say a PIII 500, we had to limit the camera to five zooms and four different angles. The preferences will also start to take things away, depending on your system. If you have a minimum spec system then you'll see less people on the street and less cars.

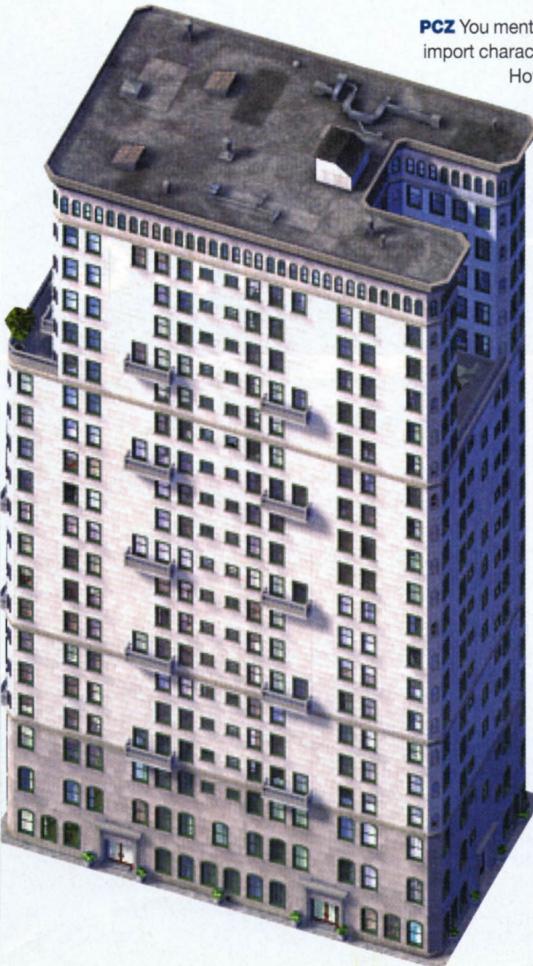
PCZ You mentioned that you can import characters from *The Sims*. How does that work?

SEAN That's in the My Sim mode where you can actually take your customised sim character or the 21 characters we've provided, and move them into a neighbourhood in your city. When they move into a house they take on the personification of that house. The game will also import all the attributes of your sim such as bio, age and astrological sign. You'll see them go to work every day and come home and they'll tell you about things happening in their area. So if you build a restaurant near them they might talk about how it's a great place to eat, but how their local school's crummy.

As you become a better mayor, they'll get a better job and maybe move to a bigger house. But the wealthier your sims get the more difficult



You can add recognisable landmarks to your city, which is nice.



they are to please, because rich people won't put up with garbage on the street or crime on their doorstep. They might even end up moving out of your city altogether. They work much like an on-the-spot advisor, but you also have the same built-in advisors as before for environment, health and safety, utilities, city planning, public safety, finance and transportation.

PCZ What about things like disasters?
SEAN At the moment we have seven disasters, which can all be random, although you can control them through God mode. So if you don't like your city too much you can take some lightning and fry a few places, create a tornado (which you can control the direction of) or even bring a giant meteor down on your people. But a lot of your city's problems will be man-made, such as fires or animals getting out of the zoo. If you let your cemetery get out of control you might even get a few zombies running through town.

PCZ Will the game have different climates and weather effects?

SEAN We have climate in the sense of water content and altitude. But we didn't put in things like rain and snow, because a city covered in snow just looks pretty much white, with a few streets and that's

it. The other problem we had was being able to show rain and have someone still be able to play the game.

PCZ You've chosen to concentrate on the building-your-own-city aspect rather than scenarios. Why's that?

SEAN We looked at that and again it came down to the feedback. People mostly just wanted to build their own cities – say a big industrial city, or a very green city. So we steered away from the scenarios in *SimCity 4* but you never know, we might go down that route in the future. There are still tutorial cities and ready-made neighbourhoods and cities. We'll be shipping with about ten different ready-made regions from around the world. You'll also be able to download cities online.

PCZ What are your own, personal favourite things about the game?
SEAN During development there were just so many things. Seeing the visual effects of the disasters was one, like the shadow on the ground from the incoming meteor and being able to steer it the way I wanted it to go. The other thing was seeing the people react to everything. Like if there's a fire on the street, they'll flee down the road and clap when the fire truck puts it out. Those are the kinds of things that make it for me. **PCZ**

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REVIEWS

LEADING THE WAY



■ REVIEWS EDITOR Martin Korda

What a great year it's been for PC gaming. If today was the last day of 2002, we could all afford ourselves a smug grin of self-satisfaction at being PC owners. Huge titles hitting on a monthly basis, more PC ZONE Classics than we thought physically possible and rocketing PC games sales have all proved that the PC is once again rising above the console mire and establishing itself as the number one gaming platform. But today isn't the last day of the year. It's not even the last day of the month. (Unless you're reading this on the last day of the month, obviously.) Which means there's plenty more time for great games to arrive before the year is out. And as if by magic, we've got a whole load in this month's reviews section.

The Thing, touted as the scariest game ever, had Steve O'Hagan quaking in his slippers for the best part of week. Or did it? Can you trust what I'm saying to you? How do you know I'm telling the truth? How do you know I'm not about to mutate into a grotesque lump of flesh with tentacles, rip out your spinal column and use it as a dish rack? You don't do? So turn to page 70 and find out for yourself.

The much delayed *Divine Divinity* (page 74) and *Hitman 2* (page 86) have finally decided to make an appearance. We toyed with the idea of delaying the reviews by eight months just to spite them both, but then thought better of it and simply knocked 70 per cent off both their scores instead. I am, of course, joking about that second part. It was only 69 per cent. That'll teach 'em to keep us waiting. And before I forget, *Battlefield 1942* (page 78) and *Prisoner Of War* (page 82) are a couple of WWII titles you'd do well to check out too. Both proved to be excellent fun, I mean, fun, but would they be as thrilling as we've been led to believe? You know where to go to find out.



Is this the scariest game of all time? Turn to page 70 to find out, if you dare.



Only games that score 90 per cent or more receive the coveted Classic award. The best of the best.



The second tier award for games scoring between 80 and 89 per cent. Essential purchases.

THE ZONE SCORING SYSTEM

Some people (mainly game publishers) say that our scoring system is harsh. It's not. It's honest and built around the seemingly outdated idea that 50 per cent is an average score. Likewise, 70 per cent is a good score, anything above 80 per cent is excellent, and 90 per cent and above is a Classic. Talking of Classic awards, don't expect to see one every issue as we don't chuck them around like confetti.

OUR REVIEWERS

We think our reviewers are the best in the business. Each one is a specialist in numerous genres and will have played every major release so no game is judged in isolation. We also make sure the right game gets reviewed by the right person, which means you won't see Steve Hill reviewing an RPG and we won't let Rhianna loose on *FIFA 2003*. We know that occasionally

you might disagree with us but we're big enough to take criticism. You can email your thoughts to letters@pczone.co.uk, or get them off your chest instantly on the forums at www.pczone.co.uk. If you think you can do better then why not send us a review – if it's good enough we'll print it in the magazine.

ONLINE REVIEWS AND REVIEW UPDATES

We review a lot of games before they go on sale, and if there are no public servers running before we go to print we won't second guess how the game's going to play online. Instead you'll find dedicated online reviews of all the major releases in our regular Update section. This is also the place where we take a fresh look at games we think have changed significantly – as is the case with persistent online games or through major patch releases.

MEET THE TEAM



DAVE WOODS

No One Lives Forever 2 Beta



JAMIE SEFTON

The Thing and Battlefield 1942

What are you currently playing?

What's the scariest game you've ever played?

Aliens Vs Predator 2

Resident Evil



70

THE THING

Bring a change of underwear



78

BATTLEFIELD 1942

We will fight them on the beaches



105

RE-RELEASES

Older games get a re-release



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DEFINITIVE REVIEWS

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FEEL THE TERROR INSIDE. LITERALLY

74 DIVINE DIVINITY

ONE FOR ALL YOU ISOMETRIC RPG LOVERS

78 BATTLEFIELD 1942

IT'S TIME TO GO TO WAR

82 PRISONER OF WAR

GET READY FOR THE GREAT ESCAPE

86 HITMAN 2

THE RETURN OF THE SILENT ASSASSIN

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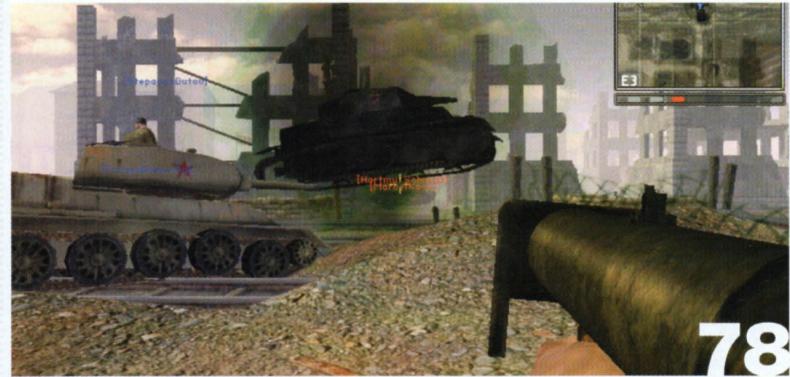
INCLUDING DESPERADOS, AGE OF EMPIRES: GOLD EDITION, MIDTOWN MADNESS, GRAND PRIX 3, NO ONE LIVES FOREVER AND MANY MORE

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SOLDIER OF FORTUNE 2 MULTIPLAYER REVIEW



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86

**MARTIN KORDA**WWE RAW Beta and
Battlefield 1942**ANTHONY HOLDEN**

Prisoner Of War

**RHIANNA PRATCHETT**

Mafia

**MARK HILL**

Mafia

**RICHIE SHOEMAKER**

Medieval: Total War

**STEVE O'HAGAN**

The Thing

Aliens Vs Predator 2

Aliens Vs Predator 2

Clive Barker's Undying

System Shock 2

Aliens Vs Predator

System Shock 2

THE THING

■ £34.99 | Pub: Black Label Games | Dev: Computer Artworks |
ETA: September 20 | www.thethinggame.com

REQUIRES PII 400, 64Mb RAM and an 8Mb 3D Card

DESires PIII 600, 64Mb RAM and a 32Mb 3D Card

Man is the warmest place to hide apparently.
What happened to the airing cupboard,
asks Steve O'Hagan



IN PERSPECTIVE

ALIENS VS PREDATOR 2

Reviewed Issue 110, Score 93%

If it's blind terror you're after then here's the Blair Witch of videogames. Chilling suspense is followed by bladder-busting shocks in the one-player missions against the flesh-ripping xenomorphs.

GHOST RECON

Reviewed Issue 110, Score 86%

Like the sound of squad tactics? Rather be blasting terrorists than be on an arctic bug hunt? Gather your men, draw up a plan and raid the armoury for some high-tech ultra-tactical firefights.

THE ANTARCTIC

is a hostile place. Temperatures that can freeze tears before they leave your eyes. Winter nights that seemingly never end. Freezing winds that can cause frostbite in minutes and bury buildings in snow drifts in a matter of hours. Blizzards that can cut radio communications and prevent the use of any vehicles whatsoever. You'd be excused for thinking it couldn't get any more inhospitable. But you'd be wrong. Very wrong.

There's something buried deep in the ice in the Antarctic,

something that's been there for millennia. Something that arrived from a distant world. Something very weird. And very pissed off. The last thing anyone wanted to do was to thaw it out. Which

Horrible Antarctic conditions and an abominable creature from outer space. This is the deadly double-act you've got to deal with in *The Thing*. That and a team of so-called buddies

person action/adventure/survival horror number.

You are Blake, leader of one of several special forces teams deployed to investigate the catastrophe that's hit the

"There's something buried deep in the ice, something that's been there for millennia"

is exactly what a team of Norwegian scientists did when they discovered it. And not only was it the last thing they wanted to do, it was pretty much the last thing they did.

who are liable to panic, get taken over by The Thing, or just shoot you in the back when they stop trusting you. The game plays in third person and is something of a third-

base. The game opens as you and your squad land at the now devastated US base. It's only a matter of hours since the movie ended. What, you haven't seen the movie? Sort your life



You'll be damn glad for your flamethrowers when you're stuck out in that freezing arctic darkness.



You don't get up from that.



It's not long before the creatures become a flaming pain in the arse. I'll get my coat.

SIGHTSEEING

LIKE A BEAMING TOURIST WITH A CAMERA, WE WENT IN SEARCH OF BITS FROM THE FILM THAT ARE IN THE GAME

If you haven't seen the movie *The Thing*, here's what happens. Norwegian scientists dig up an alien frozen in the ice near an Antarctic research station. Which is not a good idea considering it's a blood-crazed shape-shifting killer that can imitate any life-form it encounters. The creature moves on to a US base and kills everyone, but then Kurt Russell blows the whole place up.

For those of you who have had the cinematic pleasure, you'll be keen to see what locations and characters have made the transition from movie to game.



The US camp in the movie has burnt down by the time you get there, but you can still make out locations from the film among the rubble.



Early on the squad stumbles upon Childs' body, but it's alone! Where the hell did MacReady get to?



The mini-space ship *The Thing* builds when isolated as Blair in the shack is still there to be seen.



The odd moment brings it all flooding back such as when you have to bleed test members of the squad to see if anyone's infected.

out, but for now have a look at the Sightseeing box to get up to date.

COLD AS ICE

It doesn't take you long to work out the shit has hit the fan. The whole place is a smouldering ruin. There are corpses and trails of gore strewn about. And to make matters worse a storm has whipped up, cutting off communications between the squads and with HQ.

As the insertion helicopter pulls away, the first thing you have to contend with out in the darkness of the snowstorm is the extreme cold. Spend too long out there and your health starts plummeting along with the temperature. Fortunately, duck under even the flimsiest of cover and you immediately warm up.

Looking round the base confirms that *The Thing* is a fine looking game – up to a point. The character models are intricately detailed, the lighting effects create plenty of atmosphere, and the snow billows convincingly around you as you trudge through the fresh powder outside. But in other areas, it



You should team up to roast the big 'uns.'

lets itself down. Shadows are cast into thin air when you perch on elevated platforms. The camera jumps around when you navigate enclosed spaces. And it's easy to trigger a graphical glitch with all manner of limbs and appendages disappearing through walls when you get too close.

SECOND OPINION

KURT RUSSELL MUST BE TURNING IN HIS GRAVE, RECKONS ANTHONY HOLDEN



The Thing is a great film, that much we've established. And hugely fertile material for a game, too. Or at least that's what I thought before I started playing; very soon into the opening scenes I started having second thoughts. This happened at about the same time I was bombarded by the first in a long series of horrible text-heavy instruction screens. The

information in them is pretty vital to how the game works, but presented in such a clumsy and archaic way that I simply couldn't bear to plough through it all. Things didn't really pick up after that, and pretty soon I was starting to rather dislike the film as well. Sure, the need to monitor the psychology of your team-mates is a cool idea, but heavy reliance on scripting and needless dumbing-down really lets the concept down.

There are plenty of good things to be said about this game, and if you've got a bit more patience than me you might have a laugh with it, but as far as I'm concerned it's a disappointment. Maybe they should have tried their hand at *Overboard* instead.



You can carry a fire extinguisher, although, right now might not be the best time to use it.

INTO THE FIRE

In a game touted as the scariest thing to have happened on a PC, what you really want to see is *The Thing*. Or rather *The Things*. And it's not long before they start coming thick and fast. Starting with little cockroach-like heads and legs that come at you in waves, building to man-sized hunks of dripping gore that refuse to die.

In the film, Kurt Russell and co have barely any weapons bar some flame-throwers to deal with the extra-terrestrial menace. Not so here. As well as flamers, your boys are packing submachine guns, shotguns and grenades. Using these to waste the little scuttling things is a fairly easy task. Just point in their general direction and let auto-targeting do the rest, or switch to first-person and do the aiming yourself. Alternatively, leave them to your squad members who will fire automatically – and accurately – of their own accord. But the bigger manifestations are a different matter. We're talking the shambling atrocities that imitate humans and other, larger life-forms. These brutes

don't die until they've been weakened with normal weapons and then burnt to a cinder with a flamethrower or an incendiary grenade.

SUPPORTING ACTORS

Supporting each other in fire-fights is only the tip of the iceberg as far as team interaction goes. Your squad can include a medic for healing the others, an engineer to repair electrical items, and a soldier for general ass-kicking. You

they suddenly stop trusting you, thinking you've been infected by *The Thing*? Or what if they simply panic and start crapping themselves in mortal terror?

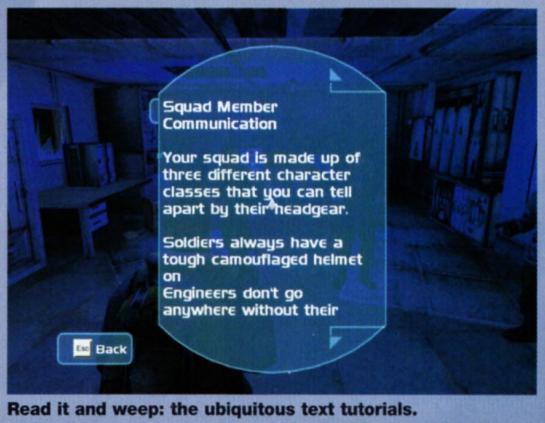
Above the heads of each character appear floating icons showing their changing mental state. Force one guy to give you his gun and he'll lose some trust. Don't fire at the aliens when they attack and he'll lose more. As your team-mates' trust in you decreases they'll stop listening to

"As well as flamers, your boys are packing submachine guns, shotguns and grenades"

can never directly control any of your compadres, only issue them orders and hope for the best. The list of commands is far from daunting with 'follow me', 'stay here', 'take this', 'repair that' being pretty much it. The only things they do of their own accord is shoot and mutter stuff like 'This mission is bullshit', from time to time.

While it's all very well barking orders at your buddies, what if

you, and even start shooting you when they become convinced you are an alien. What can you do to convince them otherwise? Well, you could give them a gun or some ammo. Kill some of *The Things*. Take a bloodtest with one of the testing kits you find around to prove you're still a member of the human race. Or even stun them with a stun gun until you get the opportunity to prove you're still human.



WILD THING

THE MOVIE MONSTER SCARED US WITLESS. THE GAME DIDN'T

There's a moment in the movie where one of the guys utters a line that just summed up how incredibly grotesque the special effects on the creatures were, especially considering it was way back in 1982. It's just after the doctor has had his arms ripped off at the elbow when a disembodied head sprouts little crab legs and starts scuttling off. One of the team catches it in the corner of his eye and says: "You've got to be fucking kidding." Quite.

It seems the film that shocked cinema audiences 20 years ago and cemented *The Thing*'s place as the best horror movie of all time in more than one of the ZONE team's minds doesn't have anywhere near the same effect now on PC. In fact, the beasties on show here just seem a little tame in comparison.



Scuttling head-on-legs
Things are the standard incarnation you'll come up against. Though fast, they don't take much killing.



A 'walker' is like The Thing Kurt Russell shouts "fuck you" at before blowing it up and the end of the movie. That lad's got a stinging tongue.



When your team members start foaming at the mouth and wailing like a banshee, expect a transformation into your standard humanoid version of the beast.

THE ONLY THING TO FEAR

Trust works both ways, and when you encounter a wandering trooper you have to ask yourself: is this guy all he seems. Because the last thing you want to happen when you're under assault from legions of scuttling xenomorphs is for the guy covering your back to start vomiting blood from his eyes and turn into a six-foot killing machine. See the Missed Opportunity panel for more on this.

Your other major problem is when your troops start panicking. If they're unarmed, trudging through the snow in the darkness outside and stumble upon a dismembered corpse, you can forgive them for starting to lose it. Again, giving them a weapon can help. Or a quick injection with the adrenaline hypo can temporarily give them the bollocks they need to follow your orders again.

A great idea, all this squad interaction and the whole psychological malarkey. But sadly it seems to be a little half-hearted. For one, in most cases you can complete your tasks without too much bother alone, even if your fellows die. And for another, typically you barely notice their changing psychological states. As long as you keep them armed and don't

shoot them in battle, they should keep their shit together. As far as combat tactics go, all you do is stand near each other and hope for the best as there are too few options in what orders you need to give to offer some kind of tactical subtlety. And the oversimplified scissors/paper/stone nature of the trust and panic systems means it's often less of a challenge to manage squad members' moods than it is a hassle.

THE THING IS...

The game stays movie-like all the way through with its frequent use of cut-scenes to keep you in the picture and set up your next mission goal. These are all powered by the game engine so they're not the best looking and many of the cuts are slightly haphazard, leaving you wondering where the hell you are when they finish. One minute you're leaving a building with your pal, the next you're standing by another structure, alone, not knowing where you are, how you got there and why you're carrying a submachine gun and not a flamethrower.

The main disappointment to fans of the film, though, will be the creatures themselves. The Thing in the movie looked like Satan had vomited a man-sized pile of offal and body parts. The

MISSED OPPORTUNITY

WE WANTED RAMPANT PARANOIA, WE GOT RAMPANT SCRIPTING

In the film, the characters and the audience are never sure who The Thing is. In the game you aren't either, but this could have played a far greater role in proceedings. The trouble is threefold. Firstly, it's no great shakes when someone's infected as they are easy to roast with a flamethrower. Secondly, these events are purely scripted so even if you use a blood-test kit on your pal to clear him of suspicion, you can turn the next corner and before you know it his arms fall off, his eyes pop out and he's shaking like a shitting dog. Both of these factors contribute to the third problem which is the lack of incentive to care or bother to find out whether one of your pals is infected in the first place. Think about it: a) it's easy to kill him when he changes; b) they will change at a set moment regardless of what you do and the test kit doesn't work anyway; and c) you might as well have him around to help out in the fire-fights until the pre-ordained moment that he does change. Which all sucks.



Losing a mate to the beast is no great shake.



If there's one thing a marauding being from outer space is guaranteed not to like, it's fire.

Things here in the game look like little computer game monsters. While they've tried hard to model their creatures on the various incarnations of the film, it gets a little lost in the translation, and what was awesomely horrific has become a little bog-standard.

Similarly, the bleak desolate arctic location provided the movie with the perfect sense of isolation and claustrophobia. But in a game it can all get repetitive and even bland. They've done their best to improve upon this by adding many locations that weren't visited in the movie, but one deserted snow-bound arctic installation looks pretty much like another.

In the end, *The Thing* has plenty of good ideas. It tries hard to be more than yet another average third-person actioner. And though it is gripping for a while, at the end of the day it doesn't all gel together as well as it could have. It's not scary

enough to work as a classic 'horror' game, it's not action packed enough to work as a top-notch shooter, and it's not tactical enough to pass as any kind of strategy game. We hoped for a classic genre-bending fright-fest. As it is, it's just another good film spin off. **PCZ**

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Draws on awesome raw material
- ✓ Interesting squad system
- ✓ Chilly, isolated atmosphere
- ✗ Jack of all trades, not quite master of any
- ✗ Locations become repetitive
- ✗ Can't match the atmosphere of the film

80

Great licence, good game

■ £29.99 | Pub: CDV | Dev: Larian Studio | ETA: September 2002 | www.larian.com

REQUIRES PII 450, 128Mb RAM, and an 8Mb graphics card. DESIRES PIII 500, 256Mb RAM, and a 16Mb 3D card.

After endless months of waiting, Rhianna Pratchett finally finds out whether this role-playing game is truly divine or hellishly bad



IT'S BEEN nearly a year since I found myself in a slightly dilapidated German castle just outside Frankfurt, seeing Larian Studios' *Divine Divinity* for the first time. My fellow journalists and I were shown round the game and then let loose to play through the first few parts. In the evening we drank beer from tankards and feasted upon roast potatoes and great lumps of pork skewered on daggers from a wooden plate. Not that all press trips are like this, of course. Sometimes they actually expect you to catch, kill and gut your own dinner first. Later we were entertained by keyboard stylings from a man with the most impressive mullet to ever grace a human head. It was a memorable trip.

Since then, the tautologically named *Divine Divinity* took a sharp nosedive into the dark development oblivion where it was perpetually on the brink of 'almost' being ready, and even I feared that I'd never get to find out what was on the other side of the bridge where the game's hefty demo left off. But finally



Sometimes it's best to just summon some creatures to fight your battles for you while you go and hide behind a bookcase.

it's here and, damn, it's been well worth the wait.

BACK TO SKOOL

After *Morrowind*, *Dungeon Siege* and *Neverwinter Nights*, it's a bit of a

shock to the system to see an isometric RPG again, regardless of the recent release of *Icewind Dale II*. The dated visuals certainly make *Divine Divinity* feel practically old skool. As you'd expect, there's the standard type of role-playing set-up, with the usual array of character classes, e.g. both male and female warriors, mages and survivors (a kind of thief/druid hybrid) and a familiar 'in times of trouble a hero will arise' plotline.

Nothing new here, you might be thinking, and to a certain degree you'd be right because *Divine Divinity* is very

much an amalgamation of many different RPGs. The strong storyline and multiple sub-quests are akin to *Baldur's Gate II*, the sheer depth of interaction smacks of the *Ultima* series, the frantic combat is reminiscent of *Diablo II* and the sheer vastness of the world makes it feel like an isometric *Morrowind*.

It all starts in a village populated by a small community of healers, one of which has found you unconscious in the woods after you've had a rather intimate experience with a strange column of light. As those of you who've played the demo will know, there are a few basic quests in the village and a large subterranean level to complete before you're allowed to go marauding through the countryside.

With 3D taking the RPG world by storm, isometric games like this are bound to be seen as a little unsexy. But this is usually a view held by people who value

"Anything that's not nailed down can be manipulated"



The interface automatically sorts your stuff. Genius.

graphics over gameplay and style over substance. For many of you out there, the *Baldur's Gate* games will be the pinnacle of your isometric role-playing experience. Don't get me wrong, I loved them too. But whereas *BG* and *BGII* gave you solid vanilla-style livin', *Div Div* gives you much more diversity. Graphically, it looks pretty good, at least for an isometric RPG, and even though you can run the game in three different resolutions, including 1024x768, you'll probably end up running it on the medium setting (800x600) just so you can see the small objects more clearly.

FLORA AND FAUNA

And detail is something *Div Div* thrives on. As soon as you step outside the front door, you're hit by it. Birds and butterflies flit above your head; rabbits (which are also handy for building up your experience points early on, as well as providing a tasty snack) scamper through the grass. Herbs can be used to make potions, everyday implements like brooms and rakes can be used as weapons, candles can be lit and snuffed out again. Practically anything that's not nailed down can be manipulated in some way.



Sadly, a lot of the combat involves running just ahead of a horde of monsters.

IN PERSPECTIVE

BALDUR'S GATE II

Reviewed Issue 96 Score 86%
The first *Baldur's Gate* game took AD&D role-playing and gave it worldwide cool. The second capitalised on this with improved graphics and plenty of extra bells and whistles. For many, the party-based gameplay of *BGII* is the definitive-word in isometric RPGs.

NEVERWINTER NIGHTS

Reviewed Issue 118 Score 91%
The storyline may be on the light side compared to both *BGII* and *Div Div*, but the added extras in *Neverwinter Nights*, which include a powerful toolkit and a Dungeon Master mode as well as strong online elements, make it the complete role-playing package.

It's not just graphically where Larian Studios have added lots of detail. Little things, such as different sounds for running over stone, water, mud, grass and wood for example, even the sound of birds or night creatures as the 24-hour day/night cycle runs its course, creating a superb atmosphere. As for the music (which you have the aforementioned amazing mullet man to thank for), never before in an isometric RPG has the score been so atmospheric that it's raised my blood-pressure to dangerously high levels.



Hmm, a mysterious portal. Guess I'll be going through that then...

BIG WIDE WORLD

OK, so I mentioned the *Morrowind* comparison, and it's not an obvious connection I know, but let me explain. In the *Baldur's Gate* games, moving from one area to the next involved plenty of loading, but in *Div Div* you walk pretty much everywhere seamlessly, unless blocked by the landscape. There are a few tricks built in to help you move around a bit quicker, such as a pair of small teleportation pyramids – one of which you drop and one you keep in your inventory – that allow you to transport yourself quickly between two locations. There are also transportation portals scattered around the land, which you can activate when you've found the right scroll.

In my time spent playing *Div Div*, I found only one edge to the map. I wandered through countryside, farmlands, market places, caves and castles etc,

picking up quest after quest, and if it wasn't for the automatically updating diary and huge world map, I would have got that same 'I have no bloody idea where I

"Detail is something *Div Div* thrives on. As soon as you step outside you're hit by it"

LOTIONS AND POTIONS



Learn alchemy and mix your own herbal tonics.

THE SECRET ART OF ALCHEMY

One of the most interesting skills in *Div Div* is that of Alchemy. Once you've learnt it, you'll be able to make use of all those multi-coloured herbs you see lying about the countryside. In its advanced levels, you'll also be able to use the skill to make bigger and better potions, and turn garbage or rotting food into poisons that can be applied to your weapons to inflict poison damage for a limited period. Making your potions is as simple as dragging an empty flask onto the right herb or fungi and letting the wonders of virtual homeopathy take place.



If in doubt, a quick fitness routine performed by a scantily clad lady subdues most monsters.

am or what I'm doing' feeling that I got when playing through Morrowind.

THE WAY AND THE LIGHT

Each of *Div Div*'s six possible characters, as well as having their own initial class-based skill (sneak, whirlwind attack and swap location), also has a tailored set of skills known as The Way of the Warrior, The Way of the Mage and The Way of the Survivor. Each of these is broken down into four different trees in a similar way to *Diablo II*. For example, the warrior has one set of skills devoted to weapon mastery, one to ranger skills, one to warrior's lore (which revolves around your innate damage and defence abilities) and a fourth tree devoted to more magical skills such as boomerang weapons and feigning death.



The game keeps a handy record of everything you kill.

Although your chosen character will be able to access the various passive, offensive and defensive skills which they specialise in the quickest, they will also be able to take on some

of the skills and spells from the other two paths, although somewhat more slowly. This basically means the list of possible character profiles is virtually endless, as you can mix

FOOD GLORIOUS FOOD



Kill pixelated bunnies! Laugh at their pathetic squealing!

THE ART OF EATING WELL IN DIVINE DIVINITY

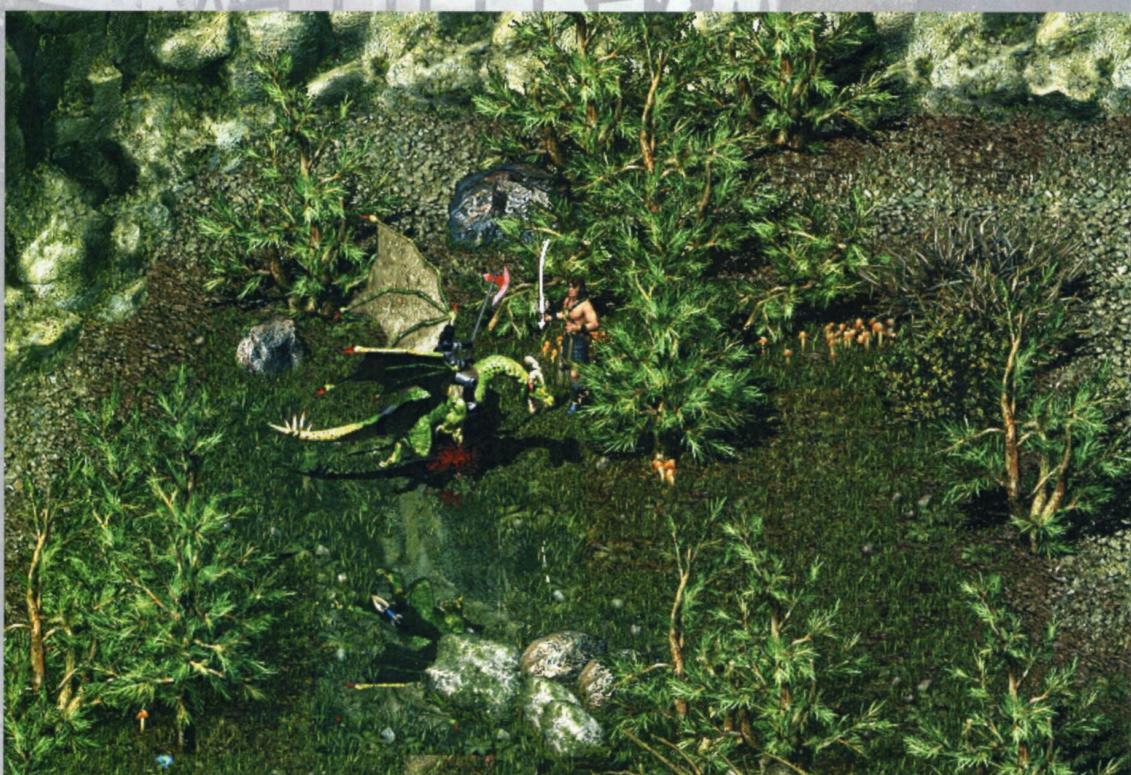
Food also plays an important part in the *Div Div* world. Practically any kind of food you find – either by killing it, picking it from the countryside, buying or stealing it – will benefit you in different ways by boosting your stats for a period of time. Unfortunately, and slightly annoyingly, you don't know exactly how the food will benefit you until you eat it. Meat will boost your strength as well as helping you regain your health, a nice bit of fish or a pot of honey will boost your intelligence, and dwarven ale just makes everything feel reeeeal nice.

"Many of the game's quests are connected and actually require you to pay attention"

and match a host of skills from different skill trees.

One of the areas I was worried about *Div Div* falling down on was the general script and voice-overs. And although

the voices of the main characters have a rather annoying American twang to them, the narrative – both written and spoken – is thankfully very good. In fact, if you thought that the storyline in *Neverwinter Nights* was less hardcore than the normal Bioware fare, then you might well find just what you're looking for in *Div Div*. There are also some nice little touches throughout the game, such as two resurrected skeletons musing about why



Call that a dragon, mate? What you have there is a winged sand lizard, obviously. Er, I'll get my cape.



You fools! Never jump lone strangers with big swords!

exactly they can move and talk without muscles or vocal cords, which eventually leads them to fall apart through excess existential thought. It may not be high comedy, but it certainly raises a smile, which is rare in the slightly sombre, serious world of role-playing.

The quest structure is very much like a cross between *Baldur's Gate II* and *Morrowind*. There's a vast number of sub-

MISSED OPPORTUNITY

OR, THE LACK OF MULTIPLAYER OPTIONS WHINGE

OK, so there's a hefty single-player campaign, but not a sniff of a multiplayer option. Although the *Baldur's Gate* games, until *Neverwinter Nights* came along, have never had a huge online following, the world of *Divine Divinity* contains a lot of the same qualities as some of the *Ultima* games, which have managed to eke out their own strong online community. The world of *Div Div* can be a lonely place when you're on your own, so a multiplayer mode would make a welcome addition to those lonesome trudges and cold nights.

quests and inter-connected plot strands revolving around your destiny and the general malaise sweeping the land. Along with that, there are the everyday problems of the locals, such as cattle rustling, demonic possession and suspicious men wandering around in big hats. Many of the game's quests are connected and actually require you to pay attention, rather than just being a simple case of 'go here, pick up this, take it to somewhere else' etc. The game is also littered with manuscripts, letters and books, which can hold vital clues for your quest, information on the land, helpful advice, or similar scribbled rantings... or maybe just someone's family recipe for apple crumble.

QUEST FOR GLORY

While you can find many of the elements of *Divine Divinity* in other RPGs, it's rare to find one that combines them as successfully and surprisingly as this one does. Although it has to be said that the person responsible for naming the game



Quite a few of the bigger battles have a *Diablo II* feel.

should definitely be led gently aside and told that no self-respecting grown-up should be titling games with words they like the sound of, regardless of their actual meaning.

It seems the future of role-playing games will inevitably move towards the *Morrowind*s and *Neverwinter Nights* of this world, but *Div Div* is living proof that, when tailored by the right hands, isometric RPGs can still be as captivating and challenging as their 3D counterparts. **CW**



Although the environments are fairly similar, there's a wide variety of monsters out there.



The environments are so detailed you can even nick fruit off those stalls.

"The list of character profiles is virtually endless, as you can mix and match skills"

SECOND OPINION

CHRIS ANDERSON IS IMPRESSED, NOT SURPRISED



Div Div is a solid and playable RPG, and as long as you are expecting no more than that you will not be disappointed. It doesn't have the environments of *BGII*, or the originality of *Planescape Torment*, but as a role-playing game it does just about everything right, without surprising you. For this reason, it will most likely appeal more to

newcomers to the genre than seasoned veterans. There really isn't much to see here that hasn't been seen before, but a strong plot, attractive graphics and good dialogue go a long way to make up for this. Flexible character development goes hugely in its favour, as does an impressive means of teleportation and the many books and manuscripts littered round the place help to set the scene. An impressive RPG then, which is more likely to be remembered as 'comprehensive' rather than 'innovative'.

PCZONE VERDICT

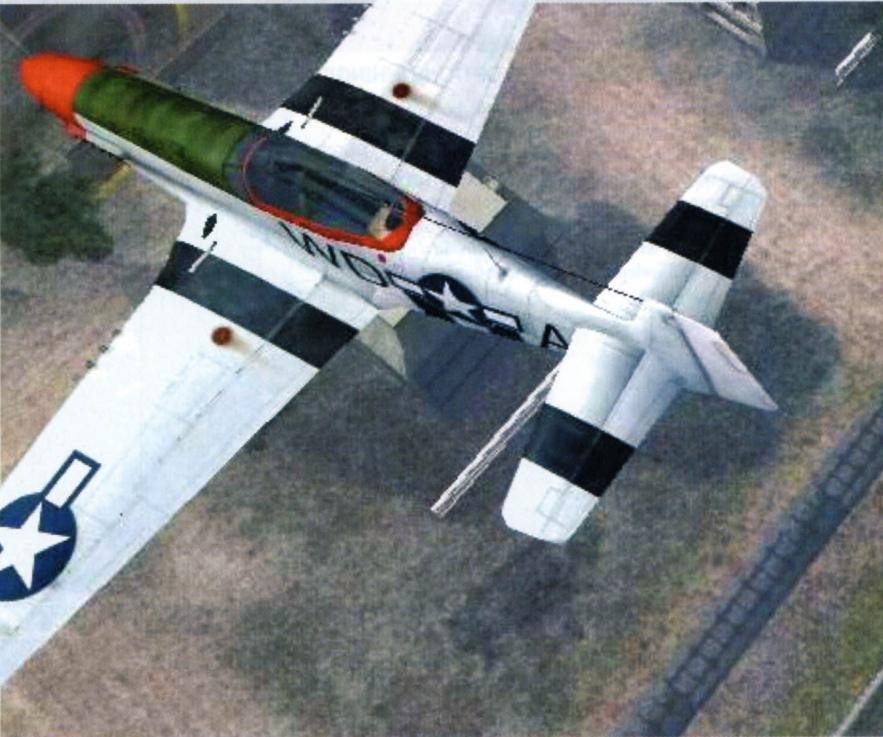
- ✓ Huge immersive world
- ✓ Superb level of detail
- ✓ Strong storyline and gameplay
- ✗ Not much new
- ✗ No multiplayer options

85

The not-so-new face of isometric RPGs



It was a handgun the last time I looked.



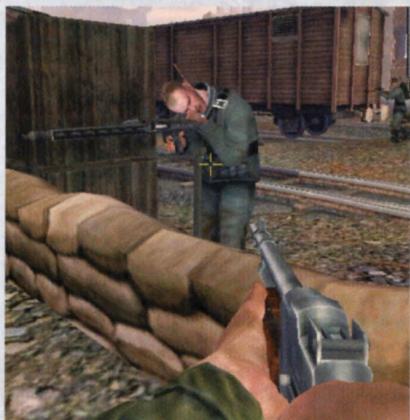
Planes that you can pilot are one of many vehicle types.

BATTLEFIELD 1942

£34.99 | Pub: EA | Dev: Digital Illusions | ETA: September 20 | www.battlefield1942.com

REQUIRES PIII 500, 128Mb RAM and a 32Mb 3D card **DESIRE**S PIII 800, 256Mb RAM and a 64Mb 3D card

The battle lines have been drawn. The enemy is approaching. Martin Korda wades into the fray



Late night?



Dogfighting is a tricky art to master.

THIS morning I was killed by a man called Shultz. Rudolph Shultz to give him his full name, a porky butcher's shop owner from the south side of Berlin. Had this not been 1942, and had we not been fighting in one of the bloodiest conflicts in mankind's history, then perhaps things would have been different. A lot different. Maybe we would even have been friends – me a jolly backpacker looking for tales to tell the boys back home (Porky, Dorky, Spot, Capper, Mapper, Dick and Spud – great guys), him a rosy-faced local of a town I'd be passing through. Perhaps we'd sit in the late afternoon sun over a couple of Bavarian beers, him slapping his lederhosened leg in hilarity as I regaled him with a barrage of anecdotes about 'ze braykeeng of ze vind'. Perhaps, perhaps, perhaps. What might have been.

Instead, my one meeting with Shultz ended in him performing a crude form of surgery on my intestines with a rusty standard-issue German army knife. War does that to people. Turns normal, civil, peace-loving people into rabid dogs of war. But I'm still alive, fighting the

fight, taking it to the enemy. And I know I'll die a hundred times more before the day is out. But I'm not afraid. Why? Because this is a computer game, that's why. And because no game, no matter how much it tries will ever replicate the true horrors of war. And this one is no exception, though it does have a fair old go.

SPLIT LOYALTIES

It's always hard reviewing games based on events as horrendous as WWII. Six-headed alien invaders from the planet Kthragrok I can handle, and fictitious battles against terrorist factions aren't a problem. But a team-based WWII sim laced with

IN PERSPECTIVE

UNREAL TOURNAMENT

Reviewed Issue 81, Score 90%
Much more fast-paced and far less tactical. If you like your team-based shooters more manic then this is your best bet.

OPERATION FLASHPOINT

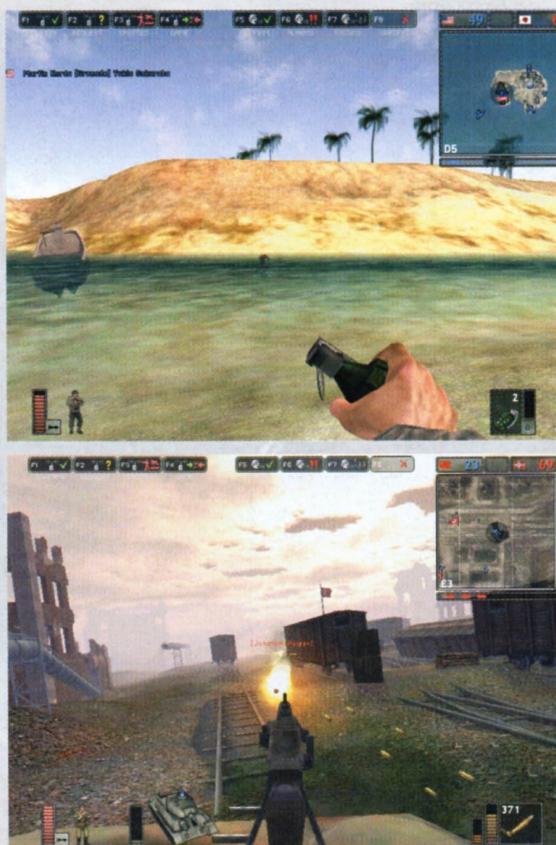
Reviewed Issue 104, Score 90%
More hardcore and supremely detailed. If you think *Battlefield* sounds a little too arcadey for you then *Flashpoint* will provide a far stiffer challenge.

shots of smooth arcadeyness, one in which you respawn every time your body is separated from your limbs feels a little, well, wrong. Disrespectful almost. However, this is a game (obviously) and I'm a games reviewer (what do you mean debatable?), so regardless of the moral tug of war that walks solemnly hand in hand with something like this, I suppose we'd better see how it plays.

There's been a huge fanfare over *Battlefield 1942*, and a massive amount of excitement has been generated during the past few months – much of it resonating off the girly-pink walls of the PC ZONE office. 'The best team-based war sim in history,' some have claimed with bolshy gusto. But is it really? For starters, let me venture a guess here. Those who make that claim haven't played the single-player campaign yet. A campaign riddled with more holes than a Kan-Kanning soldier in no-man's land. What they've played is the massively diverse, exciting and instantly playable multiplayer games. So before we all cream ourselves in happy unison, let's take each part separately (multiplayer and single-player), dissect them like lab animals and then sew them back up again before making a final judgment? Sound fair to you? Good.

SINGLE-PLAYER HUN

As you may well have guessed, *Battlefield*'s single-player campaign 'Aint all thaayt'. For those of you still a bit hazy about what's involved, here's the bit where you need to pay attention. Yes you, the one with the glazed-over look. That's better. Fighting as either the Allies or the Axis through a series of key WWII battles (based in Africa, the Pacific and Europe), you and



Is that what I think it...

"The body count mounts up like a 1980s action movie"

your team must prevail through any means at your disposal, first by selecting from one of five unique classes (Assault, Engineer, Anti-Tank, Medic and Scout), and then by utilising any number of vehicles (tanks, jeeps, APCs, ships, planes, bombers) to your advantage.

A limited amount of Command Points means that you only have a finite amount

of equipment. The first team to run out of Command Points are the losers. It's that simple. No actually, I lied. Had you going for a moment though, eh? Actually, it really isn't that simple at all in the single-player campaign, purely because your team-mates are the biggest collection of no-brained idiots you're ever likely to encounter this side of a vegetable patch. To give you an

PLAYING WITH EACH OTHER

WHEN YOU'VE HAD YOUR FILL OF THE MORONIC AI, YOU KNOW THE TIME IS RIGHT TO PLAY YOUR MORONIC FRIENDS INSTEAD



Multiplayer games are explosive affairs.

After playing the single-player campaign, the multiplayer options are more of a relief than sinking your spotty arse into a warm bath after it's been festering all day in a pair of sweaty kecks. Team Deathmatch, Capture The Flag, Conquest and Co-op are the four game types on offer.

CTF is hilarious. You pilfer the rag on a pole from the enemy and race back to your base in any vehicle you can get hold of. Team Deathmatch is fairly self-explanatory, while Conquest and Co-op both revolve around capturing the enemy's bases and reducing their Tickets (Command Points) to zero. Working as a team is essential, meaning there's no room for glory boys, and making sure each person pilots the vehicle most suited to them will usually lead to victory. Be warned though, most of the maps simply don't reveal their true entertainment value until you get at least seven or eight players to a side, as their sprawling nature and the sheer freedom they offer can make games seem empty and uninteresting with smaller numbers.

Expect a full multiplayer review in a couple of months. We'll tell you how well it plays online, how many servers are available and most importantly – if it's the one to dethrone *Counter-Strike*.

idea, here's just one example of what you might expect.

The level starts. Everyone jumps into the nearest vehicle and drives off in random directions. You bring up your orders menu. "Stick together!" you scream. Everyone drives off in random directions. "Follow me!" Everyone drives off in random directions. "Back me up and I'll let you sleep with my

sister!" Everyone drives off in random directions.

Some vehicles have room for a driver and a gunner. Great you think, an AI driver will let me scatter bullets all over the battlefield and mow down the enemy without having to worry about steering. Right? No. An AI driver will usually make sure you drive off in the opposite direction to the enemy, allowing you to



Where do you think you're going?



Great hat. He must be going to Ascot.

MISSED OPPORTUNITY

TAKING COMMAND SHOULD BE EASIER

Apart from the obvious – a decent single-player game, *Battlefield 1942* is crying out for an intuitive Command Interface. The current one is confusing and hard to see, and in the midst of battle, nearly impossible to use. A clearer and more logical menu system would allow you to concentrate more on winning the battle and less on seeing what key you're supposed to press to issue a certain order.

scatter bullets at badgers in the middle of a random field. But it gets better. Oh hold on, did I say better? I meant worse... and better. Confused? Read on...

FOR BETTER OR WORSE

Stripping down to my bare torso I bear down on the enemy lines. Bazooka in hand, machine gun up each nostril, I rain down death on the hapless foe. The body count clocks up like a 1980s action movie, as I cut through their ranks like a scythe, when suddenly... defeat. My team's defeat, that is. Baffled I try again, this time with new tactics. Donning a lacy dress, I sit at HQ playing hopscotch, stopping only to stroke a passing puppy and to pick a flower from a lush meadow and admire its beauty, when

suddenly... victory. The lack of teamwork is bad enough, but the feeling of having no bearing on the outcome of a battle simply makes you wonder why you bother. Sometimes you can literally do nothing and win, other times you're death incarnate, but your team gets annihilated anyway. Go figure.

Don't worry though, it's not quite as bad as it sounds. You soon learn that if no one's going to back you up, then you're just going to have to support them. Linking up with a couple of friendly tanks as they wade into an enemy base and wiping out a superior force is a very satisfying experience. Jumping into a plane for a spot of dogfighting is also supremely rewarding, once you've mastered it and know what you're doing. Manning



Hey comrade... What do you say we blow this war and go get trashed on some potato vodka?

massive cannons on board battleships and pounding the broadside of a passing aircraft carrier is exhilarating, and the

first time you pull off an accurate bombing run is simply sublime. What's more, the dynamic campaign counts your successes and failures as a whole rather than as isolated battles, making you feel as though you're embroiled in a massive conflict where both you and the enemy can afford to lose the odd battle and still prevail.

The levels are sprawling, varied and beautifully designed, with subtle vantage points to be uncovered and exploited for the good of your team. So you see, it's far from being all bad. Very far, in fact. Under the bugs and glitchy AI, there is a stunning game. So let's get rid of the AI and replace it with real people, as we move swiftly onto the multiplayer game.

KEEPING IT REAL

Multiplayer is where *Battlefield 1942* really comes into its own (see the Playing With Each Other boxout for more details). It's how it's meant to be played. Find a group who are willing to play as a team, and you'll soon realise it's one of the most rewarding, in-depth and diverse multiplayer games you've ever experienced. Apart from a few annoying bugs (pushing soldiers along with a tank when they should be being ground into a bloody pulp under the tracks), there's little to fault. Everyone has a role to play, from the selfless medic to the heroic fighter pilot ace, from the gritty grunt, to the hotshot anti-aircraft gunner. But as with every multiplayer game, it's often the

people who make the game great. Stumble across the wrong crowd, and even these near-faultless multiplayer games can quickly become meaningless and lonely experiences.

PARDON?

At the time of typing this, I'm sitting here in front of my machine wearing high heels and stockings, err, I mean, at the time of typing this, the game has yet to hit the shelves which means it's impossible to tell just how well it will be received by the online community (you know who you are). But on the evidence of the multiplayer games we've been playing on the office LAN, it's going to be huge. Could this be the title to dethrone *Counter-Strike*? Let's not get ahead of ourselves. But it's possible. Very possible. As ever, only time will tell. **PCZ**

JACK OF ALL TRADES

WHY SPECIALISE WHEN YOU CAN DO IT ALL?

Even though you have five character classes to choose from, there are no limits to the type of hardware you can operate. Here are just a few examples of the weaponry at your disposal



Planes are devastating when mastered.

Fighter Plane

Fiendishly hard to master but devastating once you do, this airborne killer allows you to dogfight with enemy aircraft, machine-gun foot soldiers and drop armour-piercing bombs. Watch out for the low ceiling though, which makes crashing all too easy.

Ship Cannon

Inaccurate and ungainly, but lethal when on target, this can be used against both land and sea targets to great effect. Its awesome power is offset by restricted movement, but believe me, if you see one fired at you, it's time to start saying your goodbyes.



How hard is that tank?

Mounted Machine Gun

Restricted movement is made up for by a high-speed fire rate which cuts the enemy to meaty strands. There's not much cover though, so watch out for snipers if you don't want your eyeballs shot out.

Tank

Slow, cumbersome, hard to control but fortunately also durable, deadly and defensively strong, tanks come armed with armour-piercing shells and two mounted machine guns which will annihilate just about anything. Most effective at the front of attacks with foot soldiers sheltering behind.

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Sublime in multiplayer
- ✓ Loads of vehicles
- ✓ Excellent dynamic campaign
- ✗ Piss-poor AI
- ✗ Feels as though you have little bearing on a battle's outcome
- ✗ Unclear command interface

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Slightly disappointing single-player game hiding a potentially classic multiplayer one

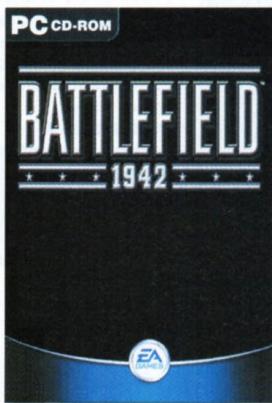
Can't wait? Don't wait!



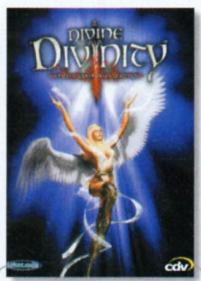
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ASP £34.99 **£29.99**
Code: RM0608



Divine Divinity
Release: 20-Sept 2002
ASP £29.99 **£27.99**
Code: RM0705



IGI-2 Covert Strike
Release: 25-Oct 2002
ASP £34.99 **£27.99**
Code: RM0900



Stronghold Crusaders
Release: 27-Sept 2002
ASP £34.99 **£26.99**
Code: RM0744



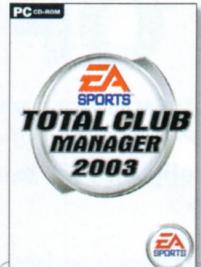
The Thing
Release: 20-Sept 2002
ASP £34.99 **£24.99**
Code: RM0662



Unreal Tournament 2003
Release: 4-Oct 2002
ASP £34.99 **£26.99**
Code: RM0604



Prisoner of War
Release: 27-Sept 2002
ASP £34.99 **£26.99**
Code: RM0901



Total Club Manager 2003
Release: 27-Sept 2002
ASP £34.99 **£28.99**
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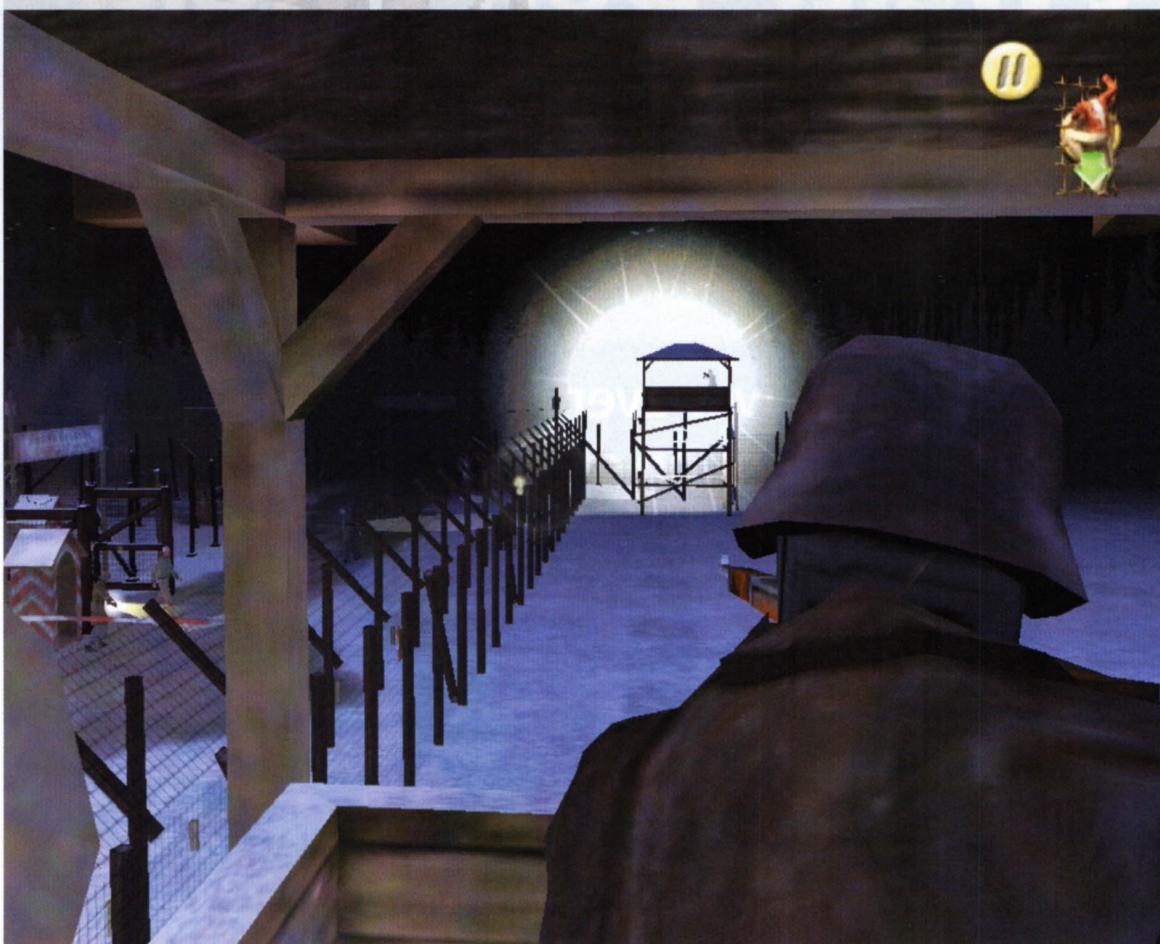
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IN PERSPECTIVE

METAL GEAR SOLID

Reviewed Issue 96 Score 82%

It's looking a little dated, and with an expanded and updated sequel due later this year we'd suggest holding off a while, even if you do prefer a little violence to go with your skulking around.

COMMANDOS 2

Reviewed Issue 108 Score 91%

Bigger, better and with a WWII setting that includes the infamous Colditz castle, *Commandos 2* is arguably the definitive WWII game, although escaping isn't the biggest meal on the menu.

PRISONER OF WAR

£34.99 | Pub: Codemasters | Dev: Wide Games | ETA: September | www.codemasters.com

REQUIRES PIII 500, 128Mb RAM and a 16Mb Direct3D graphics card **DESIRE** PIII 700, 256Mb RAM and a 32Mb Direct3D graphics card

Joining the camp inmates behind the wire to slip one up the Bosch, it seems for Richie Shoemaker the war is far from over

MAYBE IT'S just my rather peculiar brand of misled patriotism, but among the many games that have cluttered my hard drive over the years, it has

always been particularly easy for me to spot the games that have etched into every bit of code the words 'Made In Britain'. *Prisoner Of War* is another game that,

above all else, is very British – a game that, like so many before it, offers an experience unlike anything else on the shelves. Originality is something we Brits

do well – you only have to hold up *Shogun* and *Black & White* as two recent examples – and though *Prisoner Of War* falls some way short of perfection, its flaws almost add something intangible to the game's characteristic charm.

As hinted upon in the game's title, *Prisoner Of War* is so far removed in both setting and execution from the many World War II-themed games that have been assaulting our screens, that it seems unfair to make comparisons. But compare we must, and while *POW* is very much out on its own in terms of gameplay, for pure action or strategy there are far more accomplished games on offer.

More adventure than action, *POW* is a game that requires you to sneak around a trio of prison camps across five 'chapters', with the ultimate aim of breaking

out. Along the way you discover the Germans have hatched a diabolical plan to develop a rocket to lay waste to London and are using Allied POWs as a human shield to protect it.

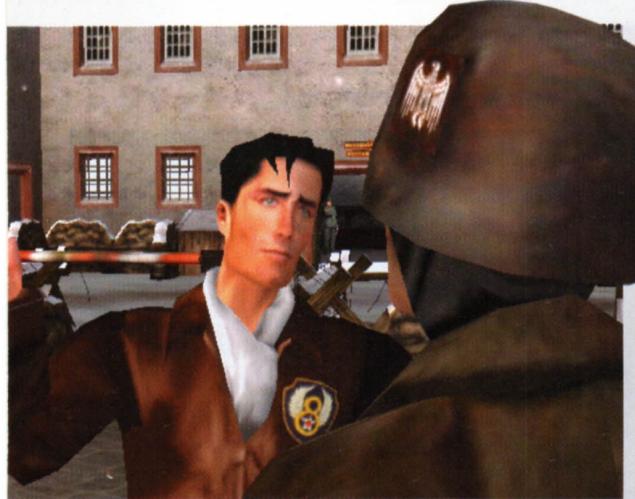
As well as escaping, you must prevent this massacre by stealing documents and radioing your findings back to Blighty. It's a plausible and very entertaining story, considering how easy it would have been for the game to focus entirely on escaping.

IMMORTALLY WOUNDED

What is sure to attract the interest of many a jaded gamer, is the very deliberate goal on the part of the developer to create a non-violent game set during what were very turbulent times to say the least. Talking to other Allied prisoners, hiding in dark corners and collecting keys, stealing German uniforms and



Walking around like this isn't going to get you anywhere, so you'd better steal a guard's uniform.



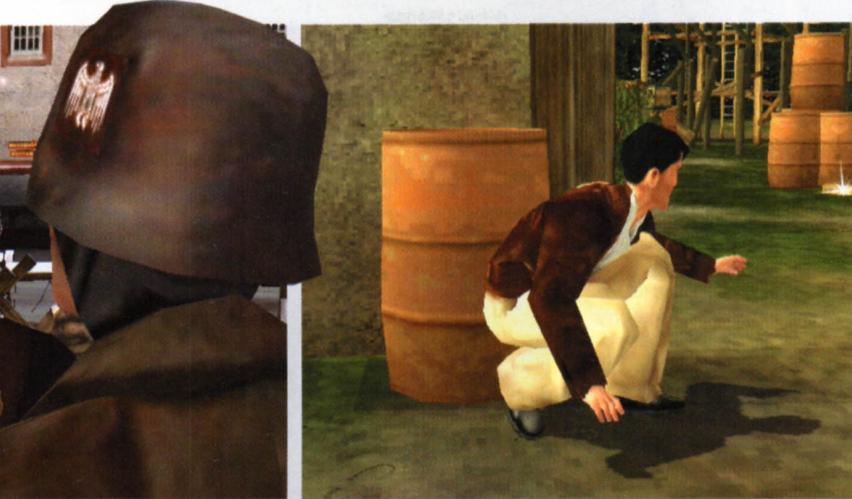
Yo my brother, that's a fly helmet you've got there.

watching out for patrolling guards is pretty much all the game tasks you will have, so those hoping to fashion a blade out of a biscuit barrel and go around slitting their captors' throats are sure to be a little frustrated, since throwing stones at guards from under the dining hall table is about as violent as it gets.

Of course, the Germans have a much more lethal arsenal to hand, but in keeping with the nature of the game, even if you do ignore their warnings while picking the lock to the library and run off in the direction of the exercise yard, a couple of days in solitary or the sick bay is as bad as it gets. The guards are rather poor shots too, which is probably why they're patrolling prisons as opposed to fighting on the front line.

CAMP GUARDS

Each of the three prison camps have strict daily routines, which

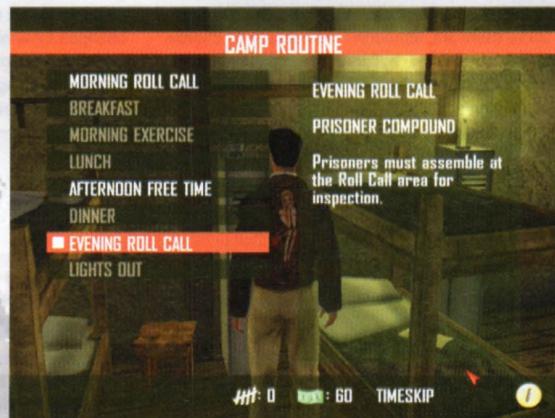


A glint on the horizon means a useful object is nearby.

basically means certain areas of the camp are safe to explore during specific times of the day. The Mess Hall is where prisoners

can safely mill about during meal times and catch up on camp gossip. Exercise time is when, if you're not otherwise engaged,

"Throwing stones at guards is about as violent as it gets"



If you want to save the game, make for your bunk.

you might want to gamble away your stash of chocs, smokes or booze (collectively known as 'currency'), or practise chucking pebbles at tin cans, and lights out is the best time to go exploring, since not only is it dark outside, but if you manage to secure a tin of boot polish or a German uniform, you can explore almost anywhere. The only times when your absence will be noted is after morning and evening roll calls, at which point the guards' barracks are

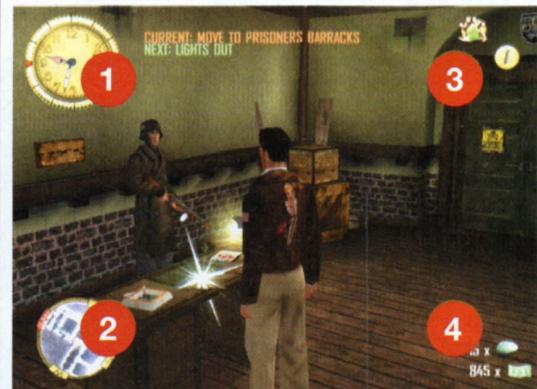
emptied and the nearest truck, table or wardrobe should be sought out and promptly used as cover until the hoo-ha dies down.

It has to be said that, although much hyped, the AI is hardly what you'd call amazingly lifelike. Shortsighted and profoundly deaf, the guards stick strictly to routine, treading the same path day after day. If you're spotted where you shouldn't be, they will search you out with some degree of intelligence, but you soon come to discover places where safety from detection is guaranteed. Rather than take this to be a criticism however, it isn't long before you come to appreciate the predictable AI and routine pace of the game. Knowing how many guards will be in one place at certain times is central to your success and learning the routines is all part of the fun.

Tension and frustration is kept high by not allowing you to save the game wherever and whenever you want. In fact, the only place you can save is inside your barrack when you go for a kip. Consequently, the more times you save, the longer it will take you to escape. Although there isn't really a time limit to

SCREEN PLAY

IT'S AS EASY AS 1, 2, 3... 4



I don't think he's spotted you yet.

1 - Clock

It'd be very tedious if the clock ran in real time, so things have really been speeded up. The number to the right shows you how many days you've been banged up, while the red and green markers tell you the current and next event in the daily routine.

2 - Radar

It's a mini map of your immediate surroundings, obviously. Unfortunately you can't zoom in, but at least it shows you in which direction the guards are facing, and there is a compass that points North, which is very useful.

3 - Context-sensitive buttons

If you're using a mouse, these two tell you when you can employ your two fingers, as icons appear telling you when you can talk to people, open doors, spy through keyholes or pick up objects. In first-person view you can only chuck stones.

4 - Currency

How many rocks you have bulging in one pocket and the wad of cash flapping about in the other. Collect 'currency' by banging into bottles of booze, cartons of cigarettes or boxes of choccies.



Things are looking bleak for our hero.

the game, there is certainly some degree of satisfaction in managing to break out as soon as possible.

FRIENDS LIKE THESE

Of course you aren't alone in your endeavours to outwit your captors. In each successive camp you meet a number of helpful allies eager to assist, some offering valuable information, others keen to relieve you of your stash of currency, either in petty games of gambling or by offering to cause a brief diversion. Despite this, however, you are very much alone, and rather than being supporting roles, the others are little more than cast extras, conscripted into the background rather than the fore.

Similarly, though very much an adventure in structure, there is little in the way of puzzle solving. Each mission (of which there are around 20) follows on much like every other, in that you must simply find objects and take them back to your barracks or hand them over to the Escape Committee. To get through doors you need keys, crowbars or lockpicks, and to get past guards all you need is a sense

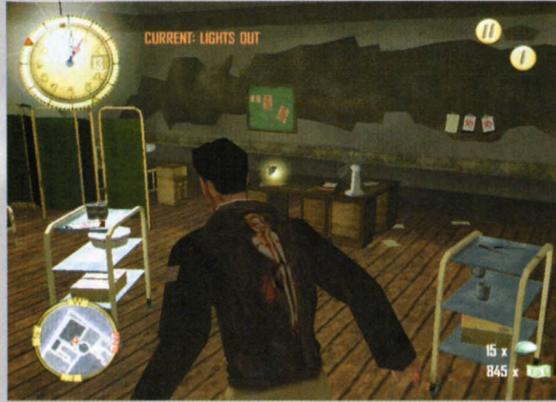
of timing, a uniform or a way of creating a diversion. Guards and locked doors offer the only obstacles, and although there is some freedom in how you go about finding each object, the challenge isn't what you'd call a cerebral one.

Not that *Prisoner Of War* is an easy game to complete – opportunities can be hard to spot and success can come only after many failures. There are no multiplayer options whatsoever, although there is some degree of replayability once the game has been completed. It would have been particularly enjoyable to be able to play as different characters though, perhaps with different abilities, such as faster running speeds or natural lockpicking abilities.

CONTROL FREAKS

But by far the biggest problem with the game are the numerous hangovers from the console incarnation, upon which the PC version is far too rigidly based. The context-sensitive controls, mapped to the mouse buttons, are hardly as intuitive as you would hope. It's far too easy to open a door by accident when you only wanted to peek through

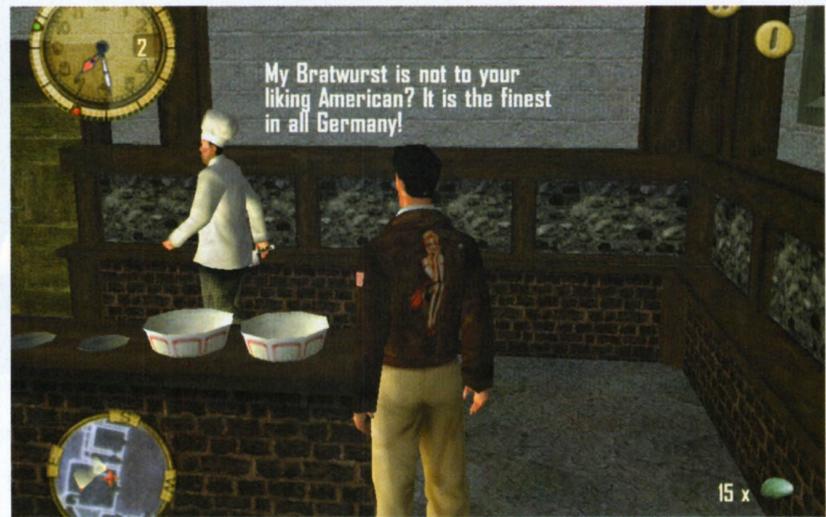
"Although much hyped, the AI is hardly amazingly lifelike"



A guard's uniform is always handy.

'ALLO 'ALLO, WHAT'S ALL THIS THEN?

POOR VOICE ACTING IS SAVED BY STUNNING SOUNDTRACK



Hilarious. I can hardly contain my laughter. Honest.

More a question of taste than a direct criticism are the over-the-top voices, which seem to have been delivered by the stand-in cast of *'Allo 'Allo!*, only without much of the supposed humour. You'll be groaning rather than laughing at what jokes there are, although I did manage to chortle briefly after being captured by a couple of overtly camp Germans after alighting the second chapter of the game.

the keyhole, for instance. Also, if you are crouching to get near to a fence, you have to hit the key to stand in order to climb over. Something like this should really have been automatic. Similarly, the camera sweeps in far too close in confined spaces, to the point where you are often touching cloth and can see little else but a pair of buttocks. More often than not this happens at crucial times where you really need to see a little more of the surroundings. These problems were highlighted in the PS2 version when it was released a couple of months ago and really should have been sorted out.

Almost as bad is the fact that mouse-users can't look up or down without going into a first-person view that on PC should have been omitted. The ability to lean around corners is also redundant thanks to mouse control, and if you want to remap the controls you have to exit the game completely, which is a little irritating to say the least.

But for all the hang-ups the PC version suffers from its translation, and for all the minor missed opportunities, the fact is *Prisoner Of War* is

far more impressive is the music, which apart from being generally good as a soundtrack, is actually an important tool in completing the game. Rather than stitching in various pieces of music to suit the mood, the music actually changes dynamically depending on where you are, what time of day it is and what you are doing. Short of copying the theme from *The Great Escape*, the music couldn't have been better.

MISSED OPPORTUNITY

IT'S THE SMALL THINGS IN LIFE THAT COUNT

What *POW* lacks are those minor details that often have a major impact on gameplay, especially in a game such as this where a lot of time is spent waiting for the right time to make your move.

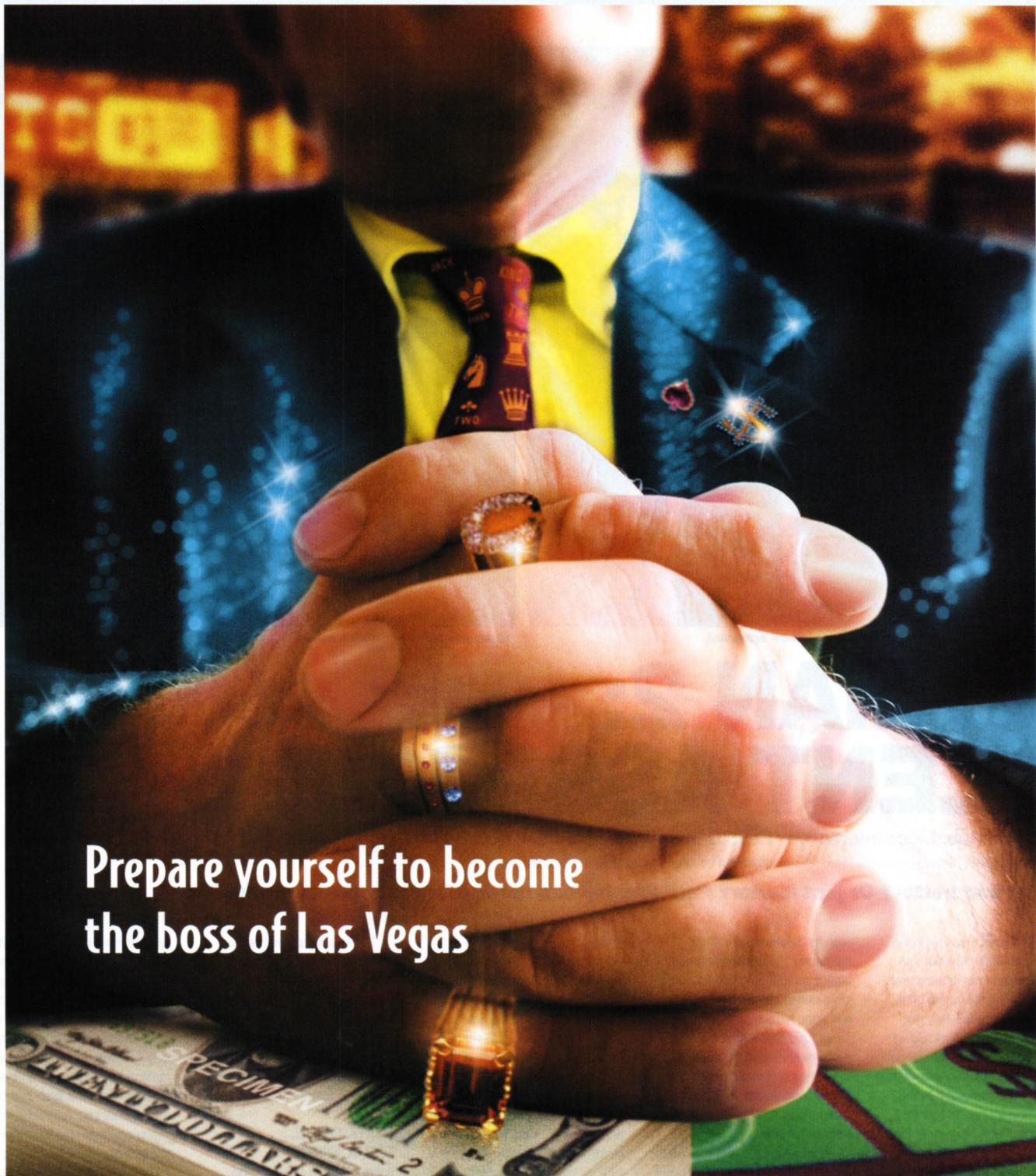
Taunting guards would have been fun, maybe seeing your character break open a packet of fags during a moment of inactivity, or hearing another inmate whistle a tune to warn you a guard is coming close. It is details such as this that add immeasurably to the immersion and, along with the many unforgivable interface niggles, there is the distinct feeling that the developers simply ran out of time.

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Original, light-hearted setting
- ✓ Lack of violence is refreshing
- ✓ Atmospheric soundtrack that accurately follows the game's changing pace
- ✗ The camera lets you down when you need it most
- ✗ Redundant and annoying interface left over from the console version
- ✗ Not much puzzle solving

77

A good, rather than a great, escape



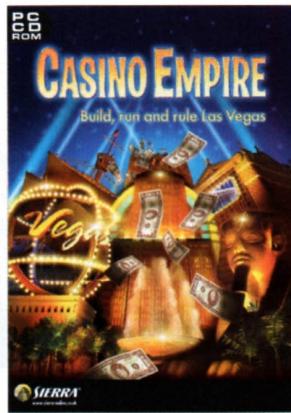
Prepare yourself to become the boss of Las Vegas

Build and run your very own casino, complete with bright lights, free booze, and wallet-sucking slots. Pack a full house by catering to the whales with the fat bankrolls, or concentrate on the hordes of desperate desert tourists. Now you call the shots on who goes, who stays, and who helps you build your Vegas Empire.



PC CD-ROM

SIERRA™



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A slight flaw in the disguise rapidly becomes apparent.



"Race you up those stairs baldy."

HITMAN 2: SILENT ASSASSIN

■ £29.99 | Pub: Eidos Interactive | Dev: IO Interactive | ETA: Out now | www.hitman2.com

REQUIRES P4 1GHz, 256Mb RAM and a 16Mb 3D card **DESIRSES** P4 1.8GHz and a GeForce 3 3D card

Bigger and better? Or just louder? Paul Presley examines a typical case of sequelitis

GEORGE Clooney may blame himself for the demise of the Batman movie franchise, but the truth is the rot set in a long time before *ER*-boy got his buttocks into the moulded rubber suit. The problem began when someone in Hollywoodland fell under the assumption that vacant pretty boy Val Kilmer was capable of producing the tortured emotional range that characterised the Keaton-era crimefighter. No one does pent-up violent mental instability as

well as Keaton and Kilmer manages the demanding role about as well as a boiled potato on a damp piece of string. So, with one fell Schumacher-led coup (that's Joel, not Michael), a character rich in eminently challenging twisted psychosis is rendered as shallow as the most banal of Schwarzenegger action 'heroes'.

That sage of our times, Steve Hill, made a very insightful point in last month's review of the otherwise-forgotten *Beach Life*

— about most forms of contemporary malaise being acceptable to today's game producers, with the exception of drug references. It goes a bit deeper than just drugs though. Other forms of storytelling media are free to explore the darkest recesses of modern society, taking chances with convention and tapping a rich vein of commercial and critical success as they go. Which storyline do you remember and value more, *Batman* or *Batman Forever*?

There is simply no reason why modern games cannot treat their subject matters with as much depth and maturity as the rest of the media and not still reap the rewards. Instead we get publishers afraid to take chances and we end up with games like *Hitman 2: Silent Assassin*.

THINK ONCE, THINK TWICE

There is absolutely nothing wrong with *Hitman 2* as a game, save for the fact that it's as soulless a sequel as any number of summer blockbuster movies with numbers instead of titles. I still remember the thrill of playing the first *Hitman*, the breathless nerve with which developers IO Interactive threw traditional morals to the wind and forced you to explore an extrapolated, fanciful, but nevertheless gritty and realistic portrayal of life in an assassin's shoes. OK, sci-fi elements abound, what with cloning, genetic engineering and whatnot, but it still remains the only game to date to make me

question my motive for killing a hapless security guard, to make me pause and feel uneasy about my violent actions. A good thing.

There was a genuine sense of character development in the original story — something sorely lacking in this sequel. It doesn't seem that way at first. You begin, as I'm sure you've read in the many previews published over the last few months, having turned your back on your past life, tending gardens in a Sicilian monastery, searching for

IN PERSPECTIVE

HITMAN: CODENAME 47

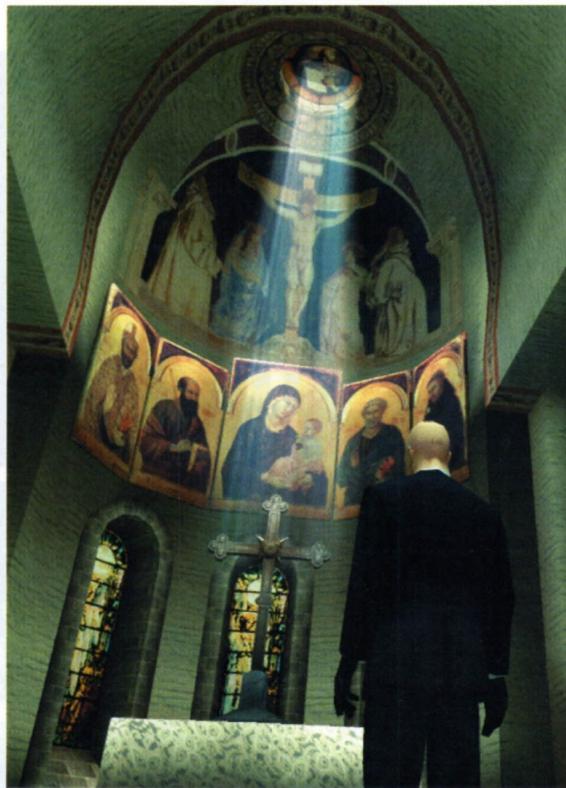
Reviewed Issue 98, Score 85%
A much darker and grittier tale, this concerns 47's search for origin. By rights the sequel should thus have concentrated on his search for meaning.

PROJECT IGI

Reviewed Issue 97, Score 85%
If what you really want is an action tale about rogue nukes, then you could do a lot worse than this proto-Bondian affair. Eschews stealth for more gung-ho gunplay.



Hope they're not lactose intolerant.



"What was that sixth commandment again?"



Bet they've got some concealed weapons. Fnarr fnarr.

"Hitman had a genuine sense of character development – something sorely lacking here"

repentance. We're shown a shadowy pair reviewing your past exploits and trying to track you down, efforts that lead to your spiritual protector, Father Vittorio, being taken hostage. This is the trigger for you to return to your violent ways, attempting to secure his freedom. Indeed, the final sequence of the game does point towards a strong story of 47's (that's you) inner search for self, for his true meaning.

avoiding a conclusion filled with the expected cliché.

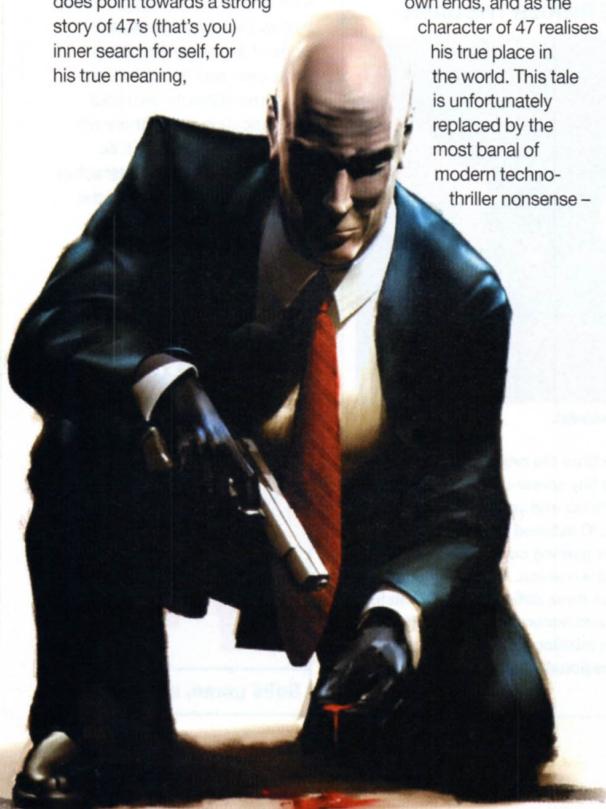
The problem is with just about everything in between these promising bookends. It should have been a potentially engrossing story, a psychological battle of wits as your new-found morals are probed and tested by this mysterious pair for their own ends, and as the character of 47 realises his true place in the world. This tale is unfortunately replaced by the most banal of modern techno-thriller nonsense –

stolen nuclear warheads and government agencies trying to do right by the world.

LITERARY REVIEW

Hitman 2 is almost devoid of the first game's sense of real-world assassination motifs. Instead we have the sort of levels that could appear in any game from *Project IGI* to *Rainbow Six*. This is best illustrated by the game's adherence to openness, allowing you to complete most levels in any number of ways, including an all guns blazing shoot-out. It's hard to pull off (and there are bonus rewards to be had for being stealthy), but just the fact that you can complete any level by mowing down everything in your way is antipathetic to the very nature of 47's being.

Again, it's a deceptive game in that the first three levels (starting with the one most of you will by now have played via the unofficially released Internet demo) don't indicate this is the case at all. They suggest the glories of the first game have been kept intact, dubious morals and all. After that it rapidly goes downhill into the stereotyped dismantling of rogue terrorist groups, under the auspices of your so-called 'Agency' controller, Diana. Conceptually it's practically a carbon copy of *Project IGI*'s relationship



NME AT THE GATES

HOW DO YOU KNOW IT'S A SEQUEL? BECAUSE THE MUSIC BUDGET'S GONE UP



A bit of light relief between kills is reflected by the score.

Atmosphere was key in the first *Hitman* game, and part of that was down to the music. This time round composer Jesper Kyd has been set free from his electro-synths and drum boxes and given free rein over the entire Budapest Symphony Orchestra to lay down his phat beats. It's a masterful work to be sure, although just as the game no longer has the original's gritty 'urban' feel, neither does this score recapture the same dark menace. It does suit the game it accompanies perfectly though, matching your present global locale to the on-screen action.

Incidentally, I've got the whole soundtrack on a promotional audio CD that was given to me free while I pounced around a central London 'spy' shop several months ago, trying on night vision goggles and throat microphones. I love being me.



A tricky fashion faux pas neatly avoided.

between David Jones and Anya, right down to the whole nuclear weapon hunt scenario. 47 has become little more than another Bond clone.

What's most annoying about it all is that there is so obviously an exceptionally talented team of creative individuals at IO Interactive and this overall restriction of plot dynamics needn't have been the case. The cut-scenes and dialogue throughout the game are of exceptional quality and not just from a technical standpoint. The opening and closing FMVs in particular contain some genuinely stunning writing

regarding 47's relationship with his mentor priest. It's maddening that this genius creativity wasn't allowed to guide the project design as a whole.

BALD IN JAPAN

They would certainly have had the practical backup to support it. This revamped and retuned *Hitman* engine is nothing short of a marvel. Gone are all the stifling problems that affected the first game, replaced with breathtaking visuals, refined controls and perhaps the most authentic levels of AI seen in any game to date. That's authentic as in the NPCs behave in

realistic – ie flawed – ways, levels which vary from one person to another. The disguises are no longer absolute, with your barcoded, hairless head needing to be covered to ensure total anonymity.

An example would be one of the Japanese levels. You might kill a Yakuza guard (another cliché: all Japanese villains have to be either Yakuza or ninjas) and steal his pants and T-shirt, but the fact you don't a) look remotely Japanese or b) have



Some of the hits are a touch creative to say the least.

a body covered in tattoos will be a dead giveaway. Run around a fire-alarm office building in a full fireman's uniform, complete with gas mask though, and no one will give you a second glance. Should said fireman be observed picking locks and

peering through keyholes mind you, suspicions will be raised. A clever little touch, and again it's indicative of how much thought and talent IO Interactive can be capable of if they let themselves try.

As I said near the beginning, there is nothing technically wrong with *Hitman 2*. It's as solid a game as you're likely to see for many a month. It's just ironic that as the titular character's signs of exploring the nature of his own soul are stifled, so the game stifles its own soul. The indication is that there will be a third in the series. If so, then I implore both IO Interactive and Eidos to look towards the *Godfather* rather than the *Batman* model for how to approach a sequel. Take a risk. Treat us like adults. **[PCZ]**

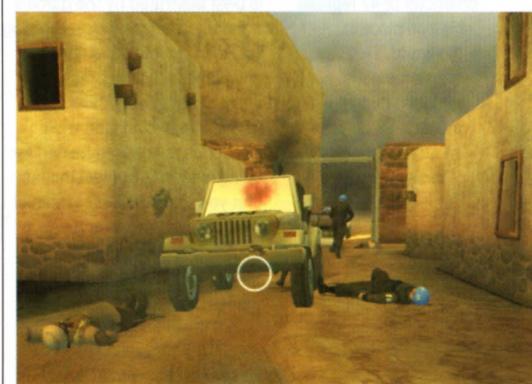
"As 47's signs of exploring the nature of his soul are stifled, so the game stifles its own soul"



Death from below.

SAVE YOURSELF

THE HARDER YOU ARE, THE RISKIER THE GAME



Hope it was a right-hand drive model.

One of the thorniest issues to arise from the original *Hitman* was the lack of saves mid-mission. One tiny screw-up at the end of an hour-long insertion into a target's lair and you had to go right back to the start and do it all again. IO listened to the gnashing of teeth and flailing of arms across the gaming community, and for *Hitman 2* have succumbed to popular opinion. Almost.

What happens now is that you've three difficulty levels which, aside from adjusting the enemy AI and accuracy levels, dictate the number of saves you have each mission. Normal gives you seven, Expert only two, while Professional level sees you without any safety net whatsoever.

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Fantastic engine
- ✓ Superb dialogue writing
- ✓ Sense of freedom in levels
- ✓ Realistic AI
- ✗ Clichéd plot
- ✗ Too timid for its own good

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Solid game, stolid story



INFOGRAMES

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SCREAM FOR MORE

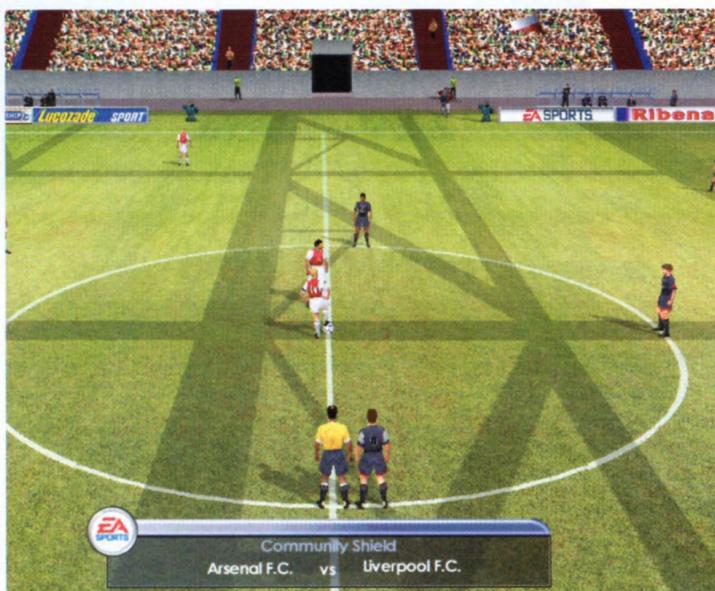


RollerCoaster TYCOON 2

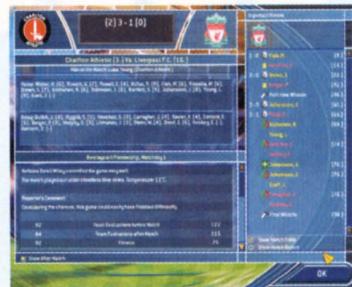


Decibels mean cash to you. When your guests' ecstatic screams fill the air, you know what they want: MORE! Finally they get what they've been yelling their lungs out for: the theme park with unlimited possibilities.

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Look away now if you don't want to see the final score (1-0).



Well, it looks better than *Championship Manager*.

TOTAL CLUB MANAGER 2003



£29.99 | Pub: EA Sports | Dev: EA Germany | ETA: September 20 | www.totalclubmanager.com

REQUIRES PII 350, 64Mb RAM and an 8Mb 3D card **DESIRE** PIII 500, 128Mb RAM and a 16Mb 3D card

Steve Hill manages to get out of bed and pick a team in this latest *Champ Man* challenger

THE TROUBLE with getting a new management game in to review is that you're so used to *Champ Manager* that simply negotiating the interface is enough to make your brain hurt. It's like operating an unfamiliar TV remote control, in the dark, with your toes. Of course, we wouldn't do anything as vulgar as refer to the manual, primarily because we weren't supplied with one. Cue several hours of tooth-grinding frustration simply attempting to get a match underway, never mind tackling the minutiae of running a professional football club.

Astonishingly though, it is actually worth the trauma, as beneath the traditional EA Sports gloss lies a game of surprising depth and playability. Developed in Germany, this

is essentially an anglicised version of a game called *Fussballmanager 2002*, given an EA Sports makeover and with the *FIFA 2002* engine bolted on. Some of the surrounding screenshots may show highly

best possible team, or the fittest, or even youngest team, which tends to take something away from the art of management.

Perversely, it works though, and the game introduces a lot of new ideas, with players 'levelling

"The game actually works better as a straightforward text-based *Championship Manager* rip-off"

detailed 3D action, but your best bet is to pretend that they're not there, as the game actually works better as a straightforward text-based *Champ Man* rip-off. Clearly, EA would never have been brave enough to release it as such, but the employment of the *FIFA* engine simply cheapens the experience, and bears little relation to what is an extremely complex simulation.

HOTDOG, JUMPING FROG

In fact, it's almost too complex, although thankfully the majority of tasks can be delegated, so you needn't bother selling ad hoardings or setting hotdog prices. In fact, everything can be delegated, including picking the

up' in an RPG fashion – albeit thankfully without spells or beards – and acquiring new

skills, such as dribbling or heading. You can also holler instructions to your players from the touchline – as in the forthcoming *FourFourTwo* – and even adopt a variety of postures, from smiling serenely to marching up and down the touchline in a rage. At one stage I was even sent to the stands for kicking the ball away when it went out for a throw-in (all this in the text mode, remember).

PRawn COCKTAIL

Half-time team talks can also raise the morale of players, who are more humanised than in

previous games. Following the Alex Ferguson mould, players who get married and have kids tend to be more settled, and less likely to be spotted rolling out of a pub in the early hours.

Developed by some of the team responsible for the execrable *On The Ball*, the incongruous coupling of bizarre gimmicks – you can build a girls' boarding school next to the stadium – and hardcore number-crunching shouldn't really work, but somehow it comes together to provide a mildly compelling experience (if you ignore the graphics mode). *Champ Man* won't exactly be running scared, but until version 4 hits the shelves, this is a contender. **PCZ**



Team of the Day reveals a 100 per cent London bias.

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Very in-depth
- ✓ Highly flexible options
- ✓ Some interesting ideas
- ✗ Pointless graphics mode
- ✗ A bit weird

77

Top six



STRONGHOLD CRUSADER™



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BEAM BREAKERS

■ £29.99 | Pub: JoWooD | Dev: Similis | ETA: TBA | www.beambreakers.de

REQUIRES PII 400, 64Mb RAM and a 16Mb 3D card **DESIRABLES** PIII 750, 128Mb RAM and a 32Mb 3D card

Having already broken a variety of bones, Steve Hill tries his hand at some beams

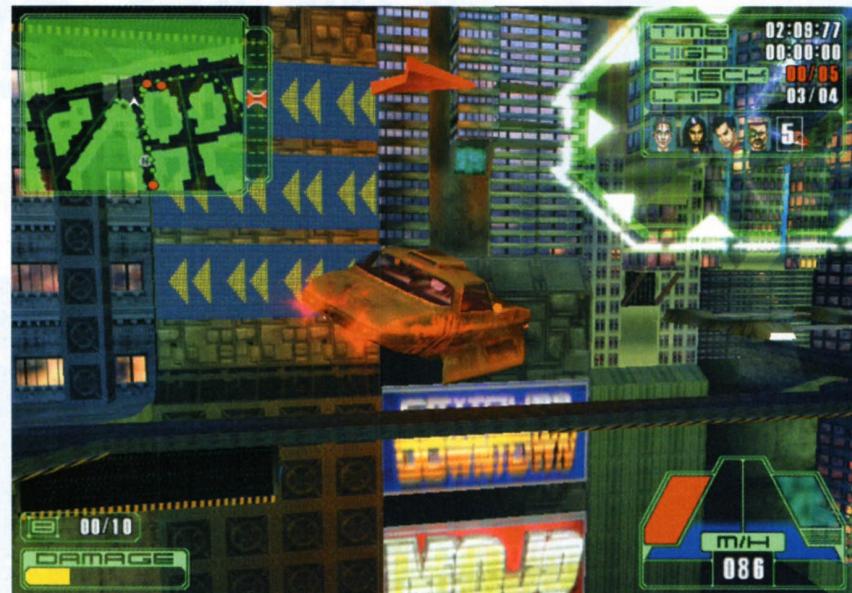
EVER SEEN *The Fifth Element?* That film with Bruce Willis mincing about as an anti-gravity taxi driver? The developers of *Beam Breakers* clearly have, and they liked it so much that they based a game around it. Well, the anti-gravity vehicle bit anyway. It's not exactly the same, and their lawyers would probably prefer to say that the game was inspired by the film as opposed to blatantly ripping it off, something that has actually already been done in the mildly entertaining *New York Race*. Throw in the officially licensed *Fifth Element* game, and that's three titles inspired by one fairly obscure film. Hasn't anyone got any ideas of their own?

Talking of which, *Beam Breakers* is a (yawn) futuristic racing game. Set in the year

2174, the action takes place on the mean streets of so-called Neo York. (Can you see what they've done there?) Except that they aren't actually streets so much as rows of traffic suspended in mid-air, due to the old gravity-defying trick. Vehicles are prevented from careering into each other by adhering to set routes determined by the beams of the title, which, wait for it, you are able to break in your role as member of an illicit street-racing gang. Basically it's boy racers in the 22nd century, with Toyota Corollas and Honda Civics replaced by generic floating cars.

NOT JUST RACES

The races involve negotiating a number of laps of courses defined by checkpoints and littered with the obligatory flurry of power-ups. Think *Wipeout* but without a road surface and you're halfway there. Along with the hindrance of the ambient traffic, the complexity of the city also makes for a number



Races are rarely the exciting affairs you would expect in this type of game.

of hazards, and there are plenty of annoyingly positioned structures for you to crash into, sapping your momentum and your patience.

It's not all about racing though, and the game offers a few different modes, such as the mission-based section where you are required to carry out

tasks in order to progress. Beginning as a pizza delivery boy – the implication being that it's a front for some kind of criminal activity – you can work



IN PERSPECTIVE

NEW YORK RACE

Reviewed Issue 110, Score 70%
A blatant rip-off of *The Fifth Element*, this isn't very good.

WIPEOUT

Reviewed Issue 34, Score 78%
Incredibly dated now, but a quality game at the time.



The sprawling city certainly looks impressive, so it's a shame that the action is so slow.



Hope you're not scared of heights.

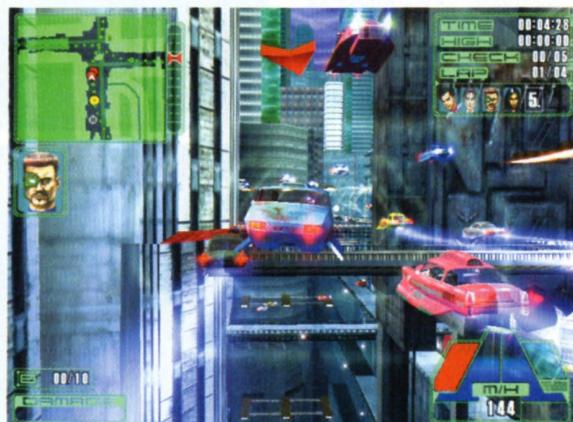
your way up the gangland ladder and perform a variety of illicit activities, with the developers very much hoping you'll think it's a bit like *Driver* or *GTA III*. There's also a Survivor mode, where you simply have to outwit the police, and a more sedate observation mode, enabling you to tour around the city and get your bearings.

ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY!

However they dress it up though, the crux of the game largely involves getting from A to B in the quickest possible time, and it's here that the game breaks down. Call us old-fashioned, but we'd imagine a vehicle that drives through the sky would move at a fair old lick, what with the lack of friction and all that. But while it may say 180mph on the clock, it feels more like a Sunday drive in an Austin Allegro (albeit suspended thousands of feet in the air in a futuristic city). For all its high velocity posturing, the action is sluggish, and a world away from the super speedy experience we had imagined. Yes, you can eventually upgrade your car for a faster model, but by then you may well have lost the will to live.

Assuming you find it in your deepest reserves of patience to persevere, you will eventually see various districts of Neo York, namely Little Italy, East Village, Chinatown, Harlem, and Downtown, replete with allegedly recognisable

"The vehicles might look like cars, but to all intents and purposes, they are little more than incorrectly shaped aircraft"



Race, do jobs for the mob and... deliver pizzas.

landmarks such as the huge rollercoasters in Central Park. It's reasonably well done, and does vaguely give the illusion of a bustling futuristic city. You can

DO GAME DESIGNERS DREAM OF ELECTRIC SHEEP?

SCI-FI CLASSIC INSPIRES COMPUTER GAME. WORLD SHRUGS

The floating vehicles, the layers of fog, the enormous video screens... Oh wow, it looks just like *Blade Runner*. Big deal, so does just about every game ever set remotely in the future. Ridley Scott's 1982 classic (itself inspired by Tokyo's Shinjuku district) appears to have become a template for virtually every vision of a future urban landscape, and *Beam Breakers* is no different, pilfering from both *Blade Runner* and *The Fifth Element*. Can't game designers come up with their own ideas of what things will look like a couple of centuries hence? Or are they happy to just lift from their favourite science fiction films,



almost as if showing off the fact that they've sat through some pensive dirge 15 times? Anyway, in the future, the world will look like Doncaster.



Decisions, decisions. Do I go high or do I go low?

sim fans, it's hard to see who this will appeal to, other than enthusiasts of mediocre games.

Possibly more suited to consoles, *Beam Breakers* is a largely shallow experience, with the arcade feel augmented by the obligatory repertoire of badly acted regional stereotypes. Having seen it moving at E3 (for about 14 seconds) we had reasonably high hopes for it, but unfortunately they have proven largely unfounded, the game suffering from a lack of pace and a surfeit of gaming clichés. It's a shame, because *Beam Breakers* could have been a truly great



There are several different car types to drive.



game. As it is, it's little more than a slightly above average one with a theme that's rapidly becoming tired and over-used. **PC**

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Moron-proof
- ✓ Sense of scale
- ✗ Sluggish
- ✗ Hackneyed

57

No future



You always see yourself as a US soldier, no matter what side you're on.

The view mode has a real *Hidden & Dangerous* look to it.

AMERICA'S ARMY: OPERATIONS

ONLINE ONLY

■ Free (223Mb download) | Pub: The US Army | Dev: The US Army | ETA: Out Now | www.americasarmy.com | Players: 2-20

REQUIRES PIII 766, 128Mb RAM and a 32Mb graphics card

DESires P4 1.4, 256 Mb RAM and a 64Mb GeForce3 graphics card

Fancy joining the army? Neither does Mark Hill, but that won't stop him playing this game



SINCE the dubious morality of a US Army produced game distributed free as a recruiting tool is examined elsewhere this issue, I'm just going to review this as a normal piece of software. One that thousands of people are playing every day.

Before you can go off and start shooting other upright civilians pretending to be soldiers though, you need to complete a series of simple training missions to get used to how the weapons work. If, for example, you don't pass the sniper rifle test, you won't be able to use that weapon in game. The results are uploaded into the game's database (and presumably the US Army's too), before you can complete training by joining an online mission where all the guns are loaded with blanks, and getting shot results in you having to sit out a round.

LISTEN UP SOLDIER
Since this is the third stage of AAO's almost episodic release method, there are only a handful of maps available, although the army has promised to keep releasing packages for the foreseeable future. The few maps that are on offer for now though, are pure class, and range from a very 'Counter-Strike' house infiltration level, to a heart-

stay down, because this is a tough game. It's also a gorgeous one, as it's using the latest Unreal engine. With more maps and the elimination of a few bugs and glitches this could be the title to finally retire *Counter-Strike*. Although we doubt the army will let the mod and mapping community work on it freely.

Whether in the long run *America's Army* turns out to be a

The gameplay is a cross between CS and Ghost Recon

racing war sim set across a snowy bridge.

The gameplay is a cross between CS and *Ghost Recon* – not as arcade as the first or as movement-constricted as the second though. Carefully planned incursions and team-play are the order of the day, and hitting targets requires a steady hand. The recent release of the Airborne and Ranger schools varies the gameplay, with the first having a team jump out of a plane in a parachute, while trying to execute a good landing, or face broken bones, and the second focusing more on woodland areas.

repulsive piece of military propaganda remains to be seen. In the meantime though, it's just a great multiplayer game, and they're giving it away for free. **PCZ**

IN PERSPECTIVE

COUNTER-STRIKE

Reviewed Issue 119, Score 86%
Still the leader of the pack and much more fun-oriented than AA. It can't stay on top forever though.

HOST RECON

Reviewed Issue 110, Score 86%
The same emphasis on realism and team play as AA, although nowhere near as compelling online.

THE MONEY PIT

Getting shot slows you down and, more often than not, makes

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ It's free
- ✓ Looks fantastic
- ✓ Realism doesn't get in the way of fun
- ✗ Only a few maps
- ✗ It's not the finished article yet

85

Regardless of who made it, it's a great game

Viewing from: Gwin
Spectate mode: Players Only

There's up to 20 players on official servers, but occasionally you can find some unofficial ones with 32 players.

MAXX PC



0%
FINANCE

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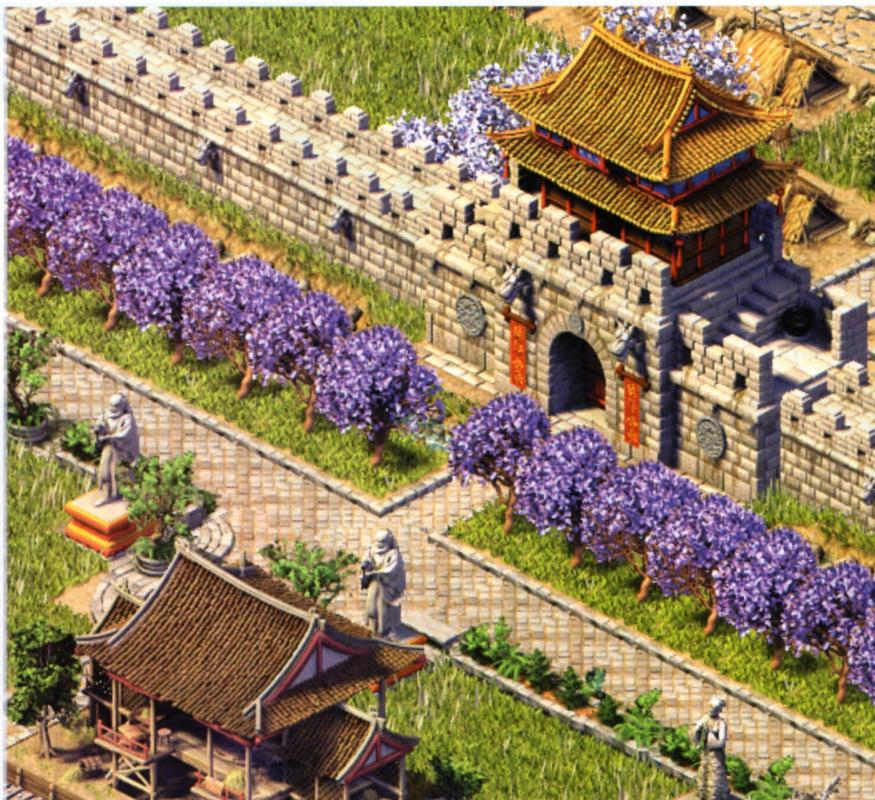
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EMPEROR: RISE OF THE MIDDLE KINGDOM

£34.99 | Pub: VU Games | Dev: Breakaway Games | ETA: September 27 | emperor.breakawaygames.com

REQUIRES PII 400, 64Mb RAM and a 4Mb 3D card **DESIRABLES** PII 400, 64Mb RAM, 4Mb 3D card

Steve O'Hagan builds the Great Wall of China



Mighty walls keep the peace.

THE LAST person to walk into the middle of a field in China, plant a flagpole and declare: "I will build a great city here," was probably subjected to eight months of intensive anti-bourgeois conditioning and Maoist revolutionary indoctrination. But it was not always so.

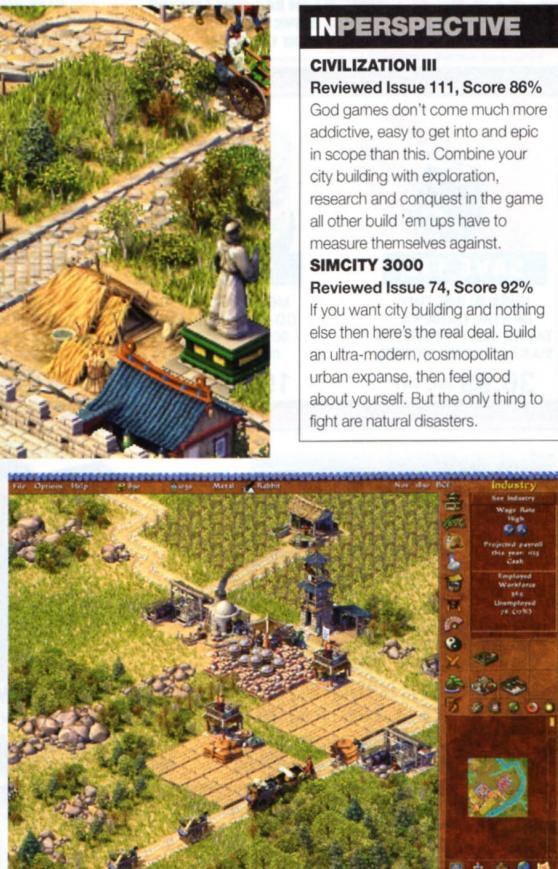
In fact, it was precisely this kind of urban entrepreneurship that elevated China, the Middle Kingdom in question, to the position of the pre-eminent power on the Asian continent. And it's from this humble starting point that you must construct a series of sprawling, thriving conurbations in this, the latest

city-building extravaganza from the people who brought us Zeus and Caesar.

PEACENIK

As anyone familiar with said predecessors will tell you, this particular dynasty of town-planning behemoths is at the intricate end of the God game spectrum. You are charged with constructing and running a city, while at the same time conducting diplomacy, trade and espionage with neighbours. It's an RTS with virtually no combat. Something like a hugely complex, though pacified version of *Age Of Empires*.

The game spans 3,000 years from around 2000BC to 1000AD in China, tracking its emergence as a powerful empire. A typical mission starts with you the master of nothing more than a plot of unclaimed land. From here, you must erect the buildings and create the



"Look at my macro-economy, look at it!"

conditions necessary to entice legions of settlers to flock to your new town to live, work and pay you taxes.

This process generally begins with the humble road. Next to this you will then set up some housing space. Wells for water,

wondrous temples and expansive palaces.

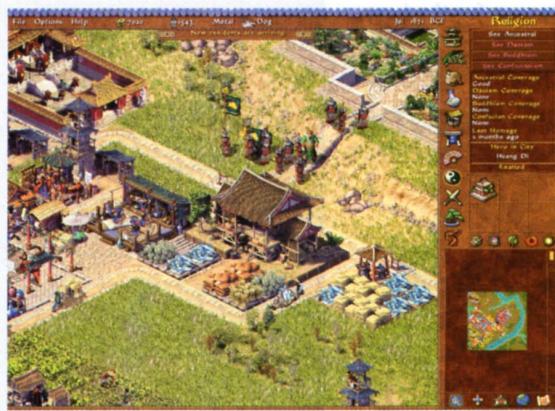
But getting from a bunch of humble hovels to a thriving, cosmopolitan metropolis of princely pagodas is no walk in the park. In fact it's a painstaking though thoroughly absorbing

"The game spans 3,000 years in China, tracking its emergence as an empire"

lookout towers for safety and hunters' lodges and fishing huts will soon follow, as will a mill and a market place to process and distribute the foodstuffs you are rapidly gathering. From here you go on to setting up farms, warehouses, workshops, schools, shrines, and finally great monuments such as

process that will steal hours from under your very nose.

Attempting the tutorials gives you an idea of what you're up against, as these elaborate and extensive training missions take longer to complete than some entire games. Sure, those familiar with the other games in the series will be able to wing it



Your market sells food, hemp and pirate videos.



Work out who to trade with and who to conquer on the world map.

and skip them, but for anyone new to the whole thing, there's no other way than to bite the bullet and learn the hard way.

FORTUNE COOKIES

There are many factors at play in your metropolis, including everything from the influence religions and differing seasonal crop types on your people, to the

variety of food available. Residents get pissed off if their neighbourhood is too close to busy markets or warehouses, and watchtowers have to be maintained to prevent fires or civil unrest. And that's just the tip of a *Titanic-sinker* of an iceberg.

This being feudal China and all, superstition and magic play a large role in events. Before you

construct a building you have to consider feng shui and check to see if it will be in 'harmony' with its surroundings. Wandering mythical heroes can be enticed into your city to spread prosperity and aid with its defence should you offer them enough gifts. And you even have to keep an eye on the Chinese Zodiac to see when you are due a year of good fortune.

All the buildings are nicely drawn, and the animations are full of character. It's easy to whittle away the time waiting for your emissary to return from a far off land by watching peddlers flogging their wares, fishermen struggling to land their catches and farmers sowing and harvesting their crops as they come into season. It's not going to give your graphics card any problems, but it does the job well enough.

LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR

It's not only your own, precious city that you have to worry about out here in China's vast hinterland, as a click of a mouse

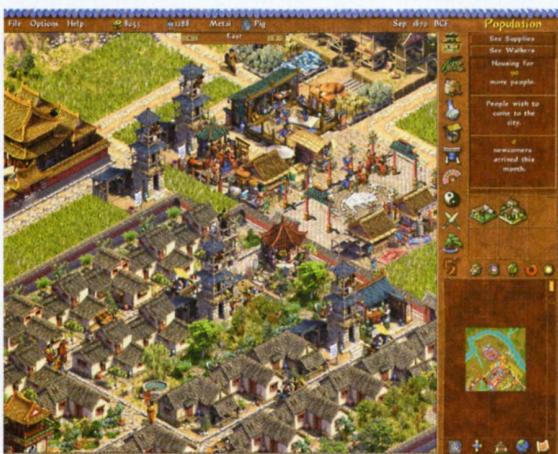
takes you to a map of Asia where neighbouring cities are shown.

The first thing you'll want to do, naturally enough, is invade the damn things, but pretty soon you realise that not only is putting together an army easier said than done, but there are other, more fruitful ways to interact with them. Try trading, for example. You could buy in the wheat that is not sustainable in the harsh desert clime of your own town, or import the expensive jade that your artisans need to craft into trinkets to satisfy the elaborate tastes of your more affluent residents.

Your military options are limited, and the combat system is pretty facile. The saving grace is that military matters are only a sideshow here, and the economic and town-planning strategies at the heart of the game more than make up for the lack of military tactics.

With seven historical campaigns containing almost 50 missions, *Emperor* boasts more

"Before you construct a building you have to consider feng shui"



Build walls to keep the plebs at bay.



Rome wasn't built in a day. This hovel was.

longevity than the Great Wall itself. And that's not mentioning the skirmish mode and the all-new multiplayer mode allowing up to eight players to attempt to out-build each other. So if you're a builder, not a fighter, and you've got a spare couple of weeks, then this is one of the best God games we've seen in a long while. **PCZ**

SUN WHO?

FORGET THE ART OF WAR – COMBAT IS A MERE ASIDE IN THIS GAME

When relations with your neighbours deteriorate the game starts to let itself down a little. Compared to the fascinating minutiae of the economies of the cities, the combat system is a simple affair. You train up a troop of men and equip them with the weapons crafted by your smiths using the ore smelted in your foundries. These troops can be dispatched to plunder your opponent's home town, or even try to conquer it entirely, turning it into a vassal that pays you an annual tribute. But apart from a couple of formation types and the ability to use heroes to swing the balance, it's a matter of clicking on the enemy to attack and hoping for the best.



PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Hugely involving
- ✓ Incredible longevity
- ✓ Nice visual style
- ✓ Subtly addictive
- ✗ Requires the patience of a monk
- ✗ Poor combat system

80

Classy though complex megalomania

Wake up, go to work, go home, go to bed, wake up, go to work, go home, go to bed, wake up, go to work, go home, go to bed, wake up, go to work, go home...

*Or perhaps,
just grab a
beer,
sit by the pool and
admire the view.*



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The bullet time from the 2002 edition has been removed.

The music is more in line with a *Tony Hawk's* title.

NHL 2003

£29.99 | Pub: EA | Dev: EA Sports | ETA: September 27 | www.ea.com

REQUIRES PII 400, 64Mb RAM and a 16Mb video card **DESIRE** PII 400, 64Mb RAM and a 16Mb video card

"Didn't I just review the last one?" asks Mark Hill before remembering how much fun this series is

IT'S A strange experience reviewing each edition of an EA Sports title. Everyone knows what to expect: an identical game to the last one with a few extra tweaks here and there, better graphics to make the most of the latest machines and some new music to remind you this really is a new version.

Since the people most likely to notice the tiny gameplay adjustments, tactical novelties and greater realistic touches are the Americans and Canadians who follow the sport like we follow football (and buy each incarnation like we buy our *FIFAs*), my job is even more awkward. I won't even go through the old motions of telling you if it's worth buying if you already have *NHL 2002*. The answer is the same as it always was: not really.

IN PERSPECTIVE

NHL 2002

Reviewed Issue 110, Score 79%
Virtually indistinguishable from this version, though slightly less sharp-looking and harder to control.

NBA 2001

Reviewed Issue 102, Score 78%
Another American sport that works really well as a game. There was no 2002 version, though 2003 is on its way.

ICE LORD

Having said that, there is still no doubt that the *NHL* series is classy. I don't know how closely

it resembles playing the sport, but as a game it's a ton of fun.

Maybe I've gotten a bit better, but the whole thing seems a bit

easier to use and delivers more fluid matches, instead of the messy back-and-forth speeded-up *Pong* games of earlier titles. You still need lightning reflexes to put up a challenge in the harder difficulty levels, especially if, like me,

The online mode has now become an integral part of the game, rather than being just another option, but as with nearly all sport sims, the real enjoyment is to be found kicking and shouting at a friend by your side.



The online mode has been massively improved over the 2003 version.

"There is still no doubt that the *NHL* series is classy"

you're prone to panicking when the puck starts flying.

As ever, when the option is included, you can spend an inordinate amount of time creating a player that looks a bit like you and possesses the skills of an ice hockey legend. One extra nice touch is that the game recognises certain common first names, so the commentators might actually use your name when you get the puck.

SAME TIME NEXT YEAR

For some reason hockey games never come with the extra modes you get in most sports. I don't expect some equivalent of an NBA slam-dunking event or a one-on-one match, but maybe a training mode where you could figure out what all the tactics do would have been nice.

On its own merits *NHL 2003* is a great game and earns itself a PC ZONE Essential award as a result. However, the brutal truth is that you could just as well save yourself £20 and get last year's edition at a budget price. **PCZ**

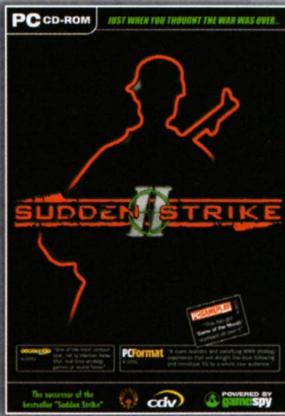
PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Fast-paced fun
- ✓ Great graphics and presentation
- ✓ Players easier to control
- ✗ Can be too fast
- ✗ Not long-lived

81

As pucks as ever

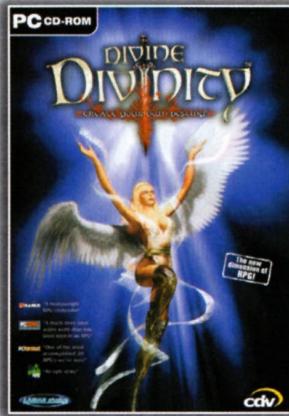
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Out Now

SUDDEN STRIKE II

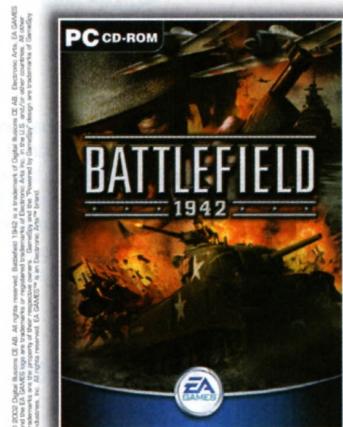
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Out Now

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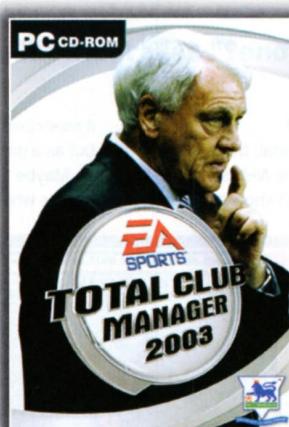
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KNIGHTS OF THE CROSS

£9.99 | Pub: Cenega | Dev: Freemind | ETA: October 2002

REQUIRES PII 233, 64Mb RAM and an 8Mb 3D Card **DESIRE** PII 400, 128Mb RAM and a 16Mb 3D Card

Daniel Emery participates in the great Polish war of the 1500s. Huzahh!!

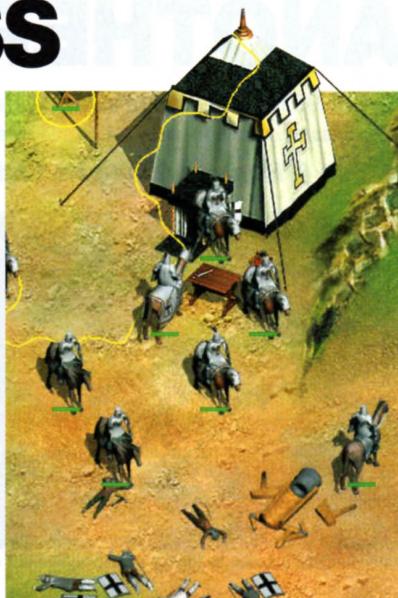


It doesn't look good and it doesn't play well either. Steer well clear of this one.

MAYBE it's genetics, but it seems Germans have a primal urge to invade their neighbours and kick the crap out of them. They did it in 1914. They did it again in 1939. And at Euro 2000 they had a fair bash at the Low Countries. But it didn't just start in the 20th century. Way back in



Knights Of The Cross is dull, dull, dull, dull, dull, dull, dull and dull once more.



A missing contact lens causes chaos at the German headquarters.

the 1500s they were having a go at the Poles, as seen in this RTS.

Sadly, the topic is probably the most interesting aspect of the game. The graphics are positively medieval and the interface is awkward at best. No 'spinny-rotational-3D-loveliness' here, instead you'll find a clunky mouse

interface and a total lack of user-friendly icons, all of which make this game a chore. We found ourselves repeatedly clicking a target only for the units to run in the opposite direction. There's also a distinct lack of units, although this is probably historically accurate (if not terribly

fun). The maps are rather small, but they're not in short supply with more than 100 available, plus 50 in skirmish mode.

However, it's not all bad. The game is available at a budget price and works on low-spec PCs, so we've been lenient on the score, as this is clearly not an

attempt to hurl a dire game on an unsuspecting public. And for that they should be applauded.

PCZONE VERDICT

45

A cheap one-knight stand. Arf

SYBERIA

£29.99 | Pub: VU Games | Dev: Microids
ETA: Out Now

REQUIRES PII 350, 64Mb RAM and a 4Mb 3D Card
DESIRE PII 500, 128Mb RAM

James Lyon is numbed by another static-screened adventure game

PEOPLE just don't appreciate the hard work put into creating the lush backgrounds found in games like this. They never take the time to sit back and admire the toil that goes into the dull landscapes and skewed buildings the artists took so long to draw. So why not force them to take notice by making them move their on-screen character from one end of the screen to the other in every location, so they can really take time to savour them? Well that's exactly what Microids has gone and done with *Syberia*.

What's more, it's made sure that for every location with an interactive object, there's another four with nothing in them at all. It has also taken care to omit any hint of a red herring when it comes to the object orientated puzzles, which on many occasions are stupidly simple to solve.

And the plot doesn't help much either. A lawyer sets off on a clockwork train to find a retarded engineer who's searching for woolly mammoths in the frozen wastes of Syberia, (it's near Siberia, wouldn't you know). To make matters worse, it feels as though the story is only half told when the game abruptly stops. However, it's slightly superior to many of the other static-screened adventure games currently available, as some of the puzzles do occasionally tax the brain and the quirky story does keep you guessing even if it is short lived. It's still pretty dull, though, so I wouldn't get too excited.

PCZONE VERDICT **42**

Yet another nail in the coffin



The action is relentless. Not!



Did I mention ropey acting?



This game could do with a one way ticket to Siberia.

ANOTHER WAR

■ £29.99 | Pub: Cenega | Dev: Mirage Interactive | ETA: September 15

REQUIRES PII 300, 64Mb RAM and a 4Mb 3D Card **DESIRSES** PIII 500, 138Mb RAM and a 16Mb 3D Card

Steve O'Hagan wishes he had another game to review



The combat system is highly unsophisticated and the adventuring feels pretty archaic too.

IF YOU thought *Allo Allo* was the apex of TV comedy, and that games have gone backwards since the early '90s heyday of point-and-click adventures, then get ready for the game you've been waiting for all these years.

Another War is an RPG/point-and-clicker where you play a debonair English mercenary caught up in a Nazi occult plot during WWII.

You select your character from a paltry three character classes and improve his skills by spending skill points, accrued from combat experience as you go. Played out from an isometric top-down viewpoint, the game lurches from sub-*Diablo*-style click-heavy combat, to tedious point-and-click exploration. There's a huge amount of reading to be done, with every object you examine throwing

up a long-winded explanation, and every character initiating a meandering conversation.

Another War's twee humour is frankly tedious, and as is so often the case in these games, it makes for obscure puzzles that can only be solved by wandering round speaking to everyone and clicking on everything repeatedly until you stumble onto a clue.

The locations look nice, the animations passable, and the



Buy this and you'll be in for a Nazi surprise. Ahem.

sound effects and music are pretty good, though lacking in speech samples – hence the reams of text.

Combat is a simple matter of clicking on your foe repeatedly to attack, or initiating 'lazy mode' and hitting 'enter' before sitting back and watching your man do the business for you. It's both oversimplified, and annoyingly easy to lose. Realism is not a selling point here, with most

characters more deadly with their fists than a sub-machine gun.

We can't really see who this is going to appeal to, unless there are still fans of those old Terry Pratchett-based point-and-clickers out there. If you're not one of them, just don't bother.

PCZONE VERDICT

30

Another dud



At last, the finish line.

CYCLING MANAGER 2

■ £29.99 | Pub: Singularity Software | ETA: Out Now

FOOTBALL

management sims I can understand, but cycling management sims? Great if you're into lycra shorts, yellow jerseys and 13-speed twist-grip gears but a complete waste of time otherwise.

You control one of 60 professional cycling teams with dozens of management options from negotiating contracts and arranging sponsorship to choosing training patterns, equipment and strategies. Add individual rider traits, medical and food management and a team of assistants to

help you, and you get full immersion in the sport. But be warned, you need to understand cycling in real depth to make any sense out of it.

Overall there are 180 races to enter in solo and multiplayer modes, which equates to 27,000 kilometres of roads and track, mainly on the European mainland. The 3D-rendered races are a technical triumph but the interface is dreadful, the game is slow, clunky and buggy and the results utterly mystifying. (AW)

PCZONE VERDICT **37**

ZOO TYCOON: DINOSAUR DIGS

■ £19.99 | Pub: Microsoft | ETA: Out Now



You'll need a whole team to shift some of the dino crap.

HOW predictable. After the dismal *Dino Island* a few months ago and the announcement of *Jurassic Park: Project Genesis* – both prehistoric versions of *Theme Park* – comes this expansion pack for the very average *Zoo Tycoon*. In a way, it's a perfect fit for the original

game, which was primitive in terms of graphics and gameplay, and does little more than add the extinct creatures to your roster of incarcerated animals.

You'll still need remarkable patience to build a viable park, since fine-tuning the habitat of each of your enclosures is as

painstaking as ever. If anything the dinosaurs are even more demanding. Veterans will find some tweaks to the interface and lots of new buildings and exhibits, but overall it's one for the undiscerning sim crowd. (MH)

PCZONE VERDICT **40**



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REPLAY

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DESPERADOS

■ £9.99 | Pub: Infogrames | ETA: Out Now

DESPERADOS, or if you prefer 'Commandos In The Wild West' is a rooting-tooting, gun-slinging strategy-based adventure that's as tough as it is atmospheric. Set in 1881 near the USA/Mexico border, *Desperados* sees you command six bounty hunters as they scour the wastelands of southwestern America looking for the gang responsible for a spate of recent train robberies.

But it's not all about shooting the culprits dead; *Desperados* is far more refined. The resourceful men and women at your disposal boast skills that range from dropping gas-filled balloons on your enemies to using vanity mirrors to blind them. In total the six reluctant heroes under your control have more than 30 different ways to kill, stun, startle and confuse your foes.

Graphically *Desperados* is sublime, with towns, fields, canyons, swamps and

every other background drawn with breathtaking attention to detail. On top of this the enemy AI and line of sight is immaculate. If someone is positioned on the roof of a building they stand a much better chance of seeing you than if they were stood at ground level.

Despite its high difficulty setting, *Desperados* has a superb tutorial for each character making it extremely easy to get into. OK, so it might take an age to actually get anywhere, but due to its highly entertaining nature you can still have plenty of fun trying.

Desperados is great value for money, of that there can be no doubt. For frustrated cowboys everywhere, this is a Wild West experience that cannot be missed.

Keith Pullin

PCZONE VERDICT

80



Bonus! Recreate the set of *Back To The Future III*.



"God, I wish they'd hurry up and invent McDonalds."

AGE OF EMPIRES: GOLD EDITION

■ £9.99 | Pub: Xplosiv | ETA: Out Now

AMAZINGLY it's been well over five years since Ensemble Studios released its debut game *Age Of Empires* and almost overnight the Dallas-based studio went from unknown developer to RTS superpower. Since that time the *Age Of Empires* series has gone from strength to strength, with a middle-age-themed sequel and very soon, a full-3D spin-off into the myths and legends of ancient Earth. But don't let that put you off the original prehistoric effort. Not only does it put many current strategy games to shame, it remains about the only game from 1997 that is as playable now as it was then.

The brilliance of the *AcE* series is its detail, depth, pace and replayability. The

passing of time has done little to dull the original's shine. The RTS mechanics remain in good working order and what little was missing from the original release was more than made up for in the excellent add-on *The Rise Of Rome*, which is of course included here.

In all honesty there's little to choose between this and the sequel, save for the classical ancient setting. The graphics are beginning to crease and the gameplay may now be too over-familiar, but for a game combining historical realism and pure fun gameplay, the paradox is easily overlooked.

Richie Shoemaker

PCZONE VERDICT

76

MIDTOWN MADNESS

■ £9.99 | Pub: Xplosiv | ETA: Out Now



GTA III's violent urban playground has made MM irrelevant.

IT'S LIKE looking at a picture of your father in his student days, all long-haired, draped in CND badges and shouting about bomb-banning and free love. Embarrassingly dated, basically. *Midtown Madness* is one of those games that was bang-on at the time of release but has now been superseded so many times it's in danger of receiving the kind of pathetic sympathy applause that usually accompanies the Kenyan Olympic swimmer competing by himself while never having seen a real swimming pool before. Or the last placed entrant in a marathon that finishes the race three hours and five days behind everyone else.

What I'm saying is that with *GTAI* doing the whole city-based driving game thing on the PC, and everything from *Project Gotham* to *Gran Turismo 3* doing the posh nobs' car racing thing on every other platform, there's just no room for *MM* anymore. It's sweet and it's innocent (and cheap), sure. But despite introducing the genre to the world, all the limitations that we pointed out at the time have since been rectified by its descendants (including its own sequel). Harsh treatment perhaps, but sometimes the best place for an ailing grandparent is a retirement home.

Paul Presley

PCZONE VERDICT

50

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Enjoy patriotic views of Blighty.

SET OVER WWII Europe, *Combat Flight Sim* was the first Microsoft sim, that allowed you to shoot things. This version's lineup includes the usual faves – Spitfires, Mustangs and Messerschmitts, in campaigns and single missions.

The best thing about it is undoubtedly the scenery – once you get a bit of altitude the photorealism comes into its own and gives you some pretty nice views out of the window. But low down it all looks pretty blocky, and you don't get that sphincter-tightening sense of speed that more recent titles such as *IL-2 Sturmovik* and *Battle Of Britain* give you.

For a title with 'Combat' in its name, the actual combat is somewhat lacking.

Although the missions themselves are well designed, the AI is poor, and the special effects and damage models are pretty basic. The plane models themselves aren't particularly accurate, but there are tons of websites out there with replacements that you can download for free.

Given the fact that the sequel *CFS2* is a far better sim, it's hard to get really excited about this version, but the scenery and expandability make it just about worth the tanner asking price, especially if you've got a low-spec machine.

Dave Mathieson

PCZONE VERDICT

65



If you don't like F1 you could always ride the Ferris wheel.

GRAND PRIX 3

■ £9.99 | Pub: Infogrames | ETA: Out Now

IT MUST BE the month for dated racing games or something, first it's *Midtown Madness* and now this. I'm half expecting a *Pole Position* re-release to pop up next. Anyway, *GP3* was mainly reviled on its release. Critics thought it lacked the prior goodness of Crammond's F1 masterpieces, while most other people just saw it as a lacklustre update.

The bottom line is there's nothing actually wrong with *GP3* as a Formula One game (bar the now outdated teams and tracks). Even the graphics haven't aged badly, although the hardcore will probably still take exception to the animated pit crews. The problem is that there isn't an

audience for it anymore. F1 fans are going to be more than willing to shell out top price for the latest version, hardcore racing fans are all stuck well into their Grand Prix Legends tournaments and aren't coming out any time soon, and the casual racer will be more willing to go with something less demanding and more fun like *Colin McRae Rally 2*. Sorry but that's how it is. Releasing *GP3* now, even at a budget price, is like trying to sell second-hand calendars. Unless they're the ones with naked ladies on them, there's just no point.

Paul Presley

PCZONE VERDICT

57

NO ONE LIVES FOREVER

■ £9.99 | Pub: VU Games | ETA: Out Now

NO ONE LIVES Forever is a bit of an oddity. Promising much in the way of originality (a mix of traditional FPS action and stealth with a load of Bond-like gadgets), *NOLF* is sadly let down with some of the worst AI to grace the PC. Proof, if ever was needed, that if a game is going to live up to its billing it needs to portray a semblance of intelligence, *NOLF* still offers enough to make it well worth a look at this price. Several sub-games (including the opening sniping sequence), the strong female character, *Austin Powers*-style humour and a solid engine (the ever-dependable LithTech 2.5) almost manage to compensate for the fact that despite some absurdly scripted rolls and somersaults, the enemy does nothing apart from spot you and charge at you along an invisible line, leaving you to simply pick them off with ease. With higher quality AI the game could have been a classic but the good news is that the sequel, currently being tweaked, is



Two stupid men.

looking a whole lot better. Keep your fingers crossed that it's as good as it's promising to be, and with any luck we'll have the exclusive review and demo next month.

Dave Woods

PCZONE VERDICT

72

LEFTOVERS

▲ PLEASE SIR CAN I HAVE SOME MORE SIR?

Another dire month of scraps in the Leftovers section I'm afraid. Kicking things off is the monotonously average stunt-BMX sim (and I use the word 'sim' in the loosest possible sense) *Matt Hoffman's Pro BMX*, available for £9.99 from Xplosiv. It's certainly no *Tony Hawk's*, and with some quirky physics and uninspired graphics, it only just about warrants an uninspiring 55 percent. Also from Xplosiv and for the same price is the even more disappointing *Supercar Street Challenge*, which shares all of *Hoffman's* faults as well as carrying many more of its own. Its shortcomings include near-identical handling for all the cars, poor AI and some ill-conceived, tacked-on car design options. The graphics are fairly impressive, but when the gameplay is this mundane, who cares? Forty per cent.

Rounding off this latest Xplosiv collection is *Star Trek Away Team*. Finally then, some good news for the budget game giants. No, actually, I'm lying, because *Away Team* is a mediocre team-based strategy game, which is even duller than its bland graphics suggest it'll be, 55 per cent.

Martin Korda



Matt Hoffman's Pro BMX



Supercar Street Challenge



Star Trek Away Team

UPDATES

A place for single-player redemption and multiplayer action

MULTIPLE CHANCES

What's all this about then?

Some PC games are exceptionally flaky on release, with bugs and omissions that are subsequently fixed over time with patches. When this happens we'll take another look and see if the score is worth upping. By the same token, massively multiplayer games are ever-evolving and because of this we'll be revisiting major releases to see what's changed over time.

This is also the place where we take a proper look at the multiplayer side of games. As we regularly review games before they go on sale, often there are no public servers up and running, so instead of telling you how we think the game is going to play we'll wait and do a proper multiplayer review here, outlining how many servers are up and how the game plays online.

"Somehow, SoFII manages to use real weapons and still be entertaining"

The big outdoor levels suffer from serious fogging.

SOLDIER OF FORTUNE II V1.1

£29.99 | Pub: Activision | Dev: Raven | ETA: Out Now | www.ravensoft.com | Players 2-64

REQUIRES PIII 300, 64Mb RAM and a 16Mb 3D card DESIRES PIII 700, 128Mb RAM and a 32Mb 3D card

After butchering legions of AI enemies, **Mark Hill** takes the carnage online

IT MIGHT not have been universally loved as a single-player game, but *Soldier Of Fortune II* is making a killing online. Although it's far behind the online popularity of *Half-Life* and all its modded incarnations, it's in the same tier of popularity as the other main contenders – just behind *Medal Of Honor* and *Return To Castle Wolfenstein*, and catching up all the time.

And it's not difficult to see why. With no pretensions of rewriting multiplayer shooters or offering a sophisticated, thinking fragger's battlefield, *SoFII* inhabits the middle line between *Counter-Strike*'s subtle, team-based 'realism' and *Quake III*'s fast-paced killing-frenzy. Which is the best way to attract two very different sets of audiences.

SLOWER, FASTER, KILL, KILL, KILL

At the slower-paced end of the spectrum is the Infiltration mode – in which one team must infiltrate the opposition's camp and retrieve a briefcase, while the other defends it. It's the most

popular mode by far, mainly because it's the most team-oriented, the maps are well balanced and the action can still get quite frenetic despite the emphasis on tactical play.

At the manic, oh-my-god-there-go-my-brains-again end is the Team Deathmatch mode, where you'll find yourself respawning every other minute, sprinting like crazy in search of a weapon and generally cackling with glee before dying. Its greatness lies in running around with up to 63 other players – that's right, 63 – in a frenzy of gunshots and grenade blasts. Incredibly, there's hardly any lag on an ADSL line even with full servers.



Deathmatch is good but not quite as much fun (as is Elimination, a team last-man-standing mode), while Capture The Flag suffers from random generated maps. This might sound great in theory, but most maps tend to look the same, and they're all too big and foggy. It does mean at least that all players start on an even footing and it is possible to find servers with no fog, although the framerate drops dramatically.

A SCAR IS BORN

Version 1.1, apart from fixing lots of single-player glitches, includes a handful of new maps and, more importantly, a whole new mode called Demolition. This takes the

game further into CS territory, since it's basically a plant the bomb/defend bombsite scenario. It's also the least popular mode at the moment, and it can be hard to find games running, though this might change as people get used to it.

The player animations are a bit rigid for the pace the matches are played at, but it's not really much of an issue, and you do get lots of different realistic costumes to go with the settings. Somehow, *Soldier Of Fortune II* manages to use real weapons and still be intensely entertaining – something that many *Quake III* and *UT* mods never really were. And with the modding community already buzzing with projects it seems certain that *SoFII* is here to stay. So turn up the gore factor and keep a mop and bucket handy. You're bound to get splattered. **PC**

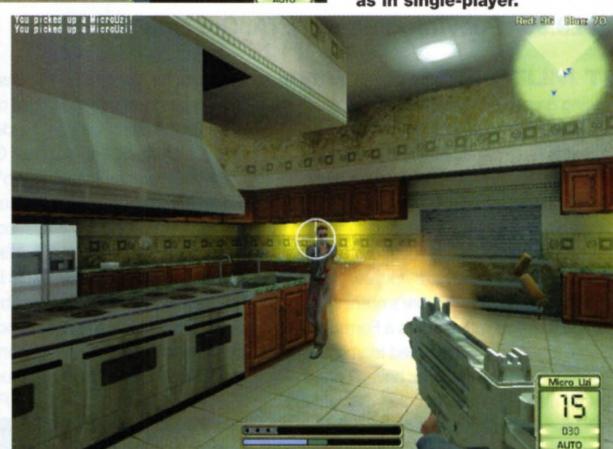
PCZONE VERDICT

FULL REVIEW (ISSUE 118) **92**

MULTIPLAYER SCORE **88**

A gorgeous symphony of online guts

The gore isn't as excessive as in single-player.



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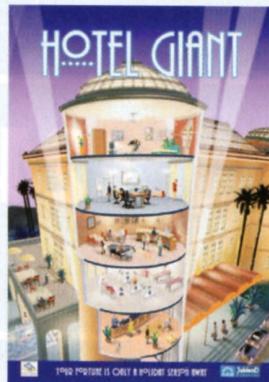
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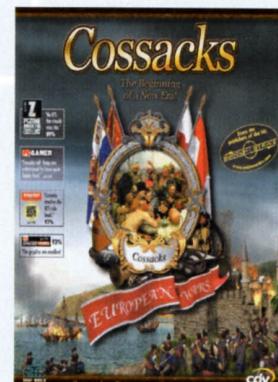
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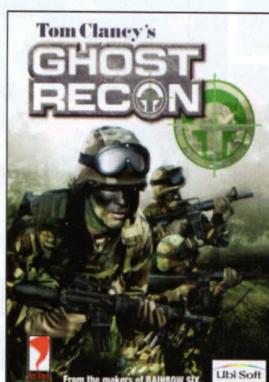
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GHOST RECON



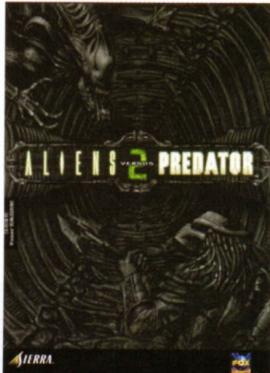
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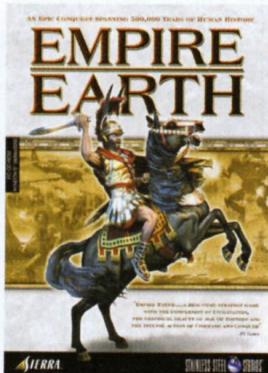
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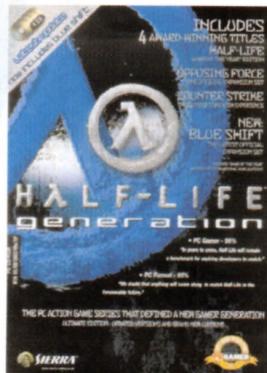
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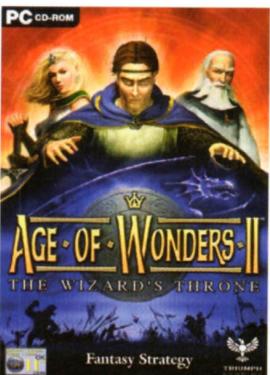
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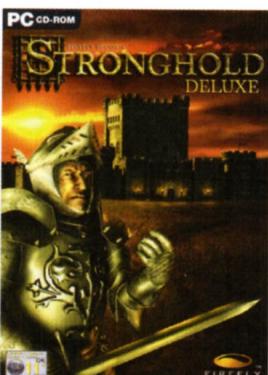
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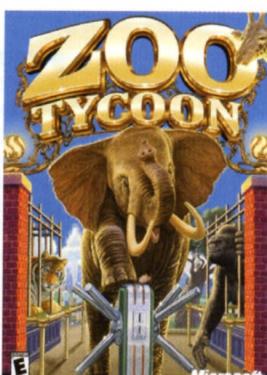
HALF-LIFE generation



AGE OF WONDERS II



STRONGHOLD DELUXE



ZOO TYCOON

WHATEVER TURNS YOU ON



megastores

HARDWARE

THE NUMBERS GAME



■ HARD WIRED Steve Spence

▲ Many moons ago, back in the dark ages of PC gaming, life was simple. 3D at its best consisted of primitive wireframe models and solid performance meant a decent processor and a piddly amount of RAM. All your games ran in DOS, and your old graphics card played second fiddle to the kings of the day – the original Intel Pentium and K6 from AMD.

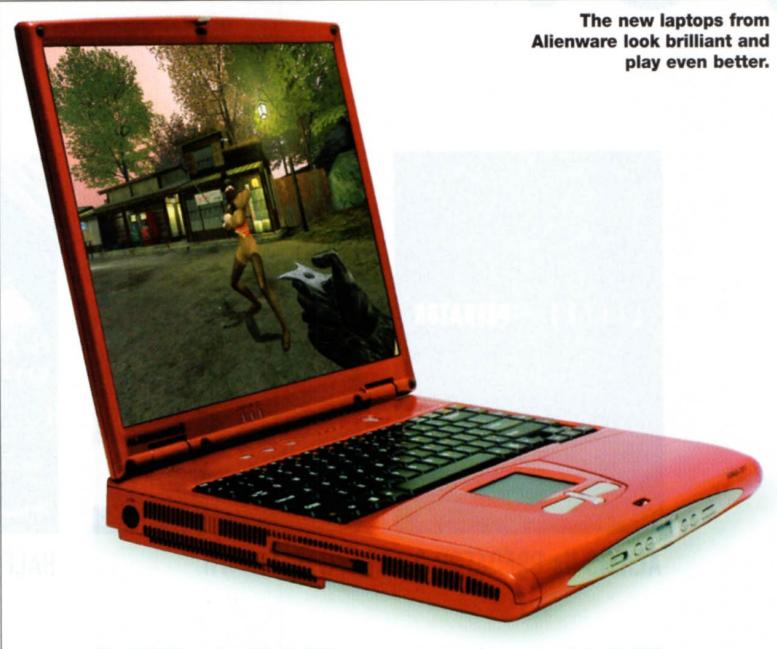
Today, the picture is very different and your PC effectively relies on sound, graphics, memory and processor equally, which makes any significant upgrade extremely costly, especially if you're an early adopter. The price of a new graphics card can now cost the same as a low-spec PC, but the good news is that things can't go on accelerating as they have over the last year or two – at some point, probably with the arrival of DirectX9, things are going to plateau. Before that happens, if you want to be one of the first to take advantage of the new breed of cards your new plaything is going to be very expensive, with products like Radeon 9700 and NV30 hitting the £400 mark. It's obvious that most of you won't be able to afford to pay that much, but there are already rumours that 'mainstream' chips such as Radeon 9500 and NV31 are going to appear offering the same core DX9 features with lower clock frequencies, fewer pipelines and a lower price tag.

And with graphics driving the entire games market, the rest of your hardware is content to play the numbers game. Where's it going to settle? Probably well over the 2GHz mark – over ten times the clockspeeds of where our PCs were five years back. My point is, if the shift to cinematic gaming has taken the industry half a decade, where do we go from here?

ATI ON THE MOVE

Gaming laptops that actually deliver are now a reality

"The Holy Grail of portability has got to be a gaming-capable laptop"



The new laptops from Alienware look brilliant and play even better.

IF YOU'RE A LAN-party regular then you're probably well versed in the art of lugging your huge desktop and bulky 19-inch monitor halfway across the world just for a game of Quake III with MINDNuMz. While a TFT screen might downgrade your required form of transport from a juggernaut to a transit van, the Holy Grail of portability has got to be a gaming-capable laptop.

Until fairly recently, the only widespread option in the market was the GeForce4Go-based chips from NVIDIA. And, while

machines with these inside aren't exactly expensive, starting around the £1000 mark, they're only capable of DirectX7 and deliver a pretty poor performance on many of today's DirectX 8 games.

MOVING ON UP

ATI has taken up the mantle, and after the great response to its Radeon 9000 GPU, a DX8.1-compatible chip based on the Radeon 8500, comes the Radeon 9000 Mobility. It's got the same features as its desktop companion and it means that if you can afford a laptop with one of these inside you'll be able to play current games with more than respectable frame-rates.

Both Smoothvision and Smartshader are present in the new chip but features such as Truform aren't – the extra silicon needed has been sacrificed in the interests of cost and power consumption. Not a factor on the desktop, power consumption is the one serious limitation on mobile chips. To reduce this problem as much as possible, ATI's 9000 Mobility sports PowerPlay, which

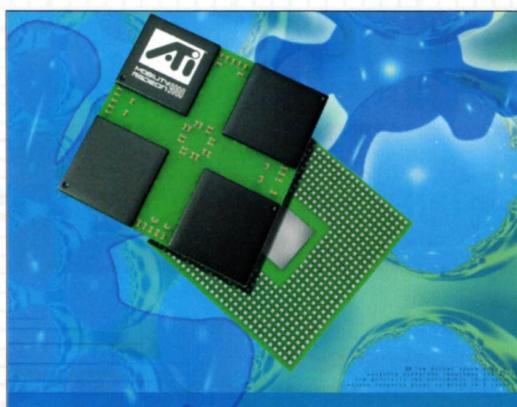
dynamically adjusts power consumption based on what kind of stuff you're doing, which means you'll be able to rampage in the streets of Liberty City wherever you go.

This doesn't spell the end of the desktop PC but it does mean that if you're considering buying a new system and you want to be able to take it around with you, a laptop is a serious option, especially with other mobile chips in the pipeline from NVIDIA and Trident (to name just two).

JINGLE BELLS

At present ATI hasn't announced whether it will be possible to upgrade systems using the new chips to subsequent versions (as with the NVIDIA range) but expect that, and many other questions to be answered when we take a look at mobile gaming offerings on the run-up to Christmas.

The likes of Toshiba, Compaq, Medion and Alienware are all signed up to produce units based on the new chip later this year with the cheapest systems starting somewhere around £1500.



Play all your games on the move with ATI's new chip.



114

CARD SHARK
Two new graphics cards tested



118

MOUSE TRAP
We find the best gaming mouse



120

DEAR WANDY
Got a problem you can't fix?



124

BUYER'S GUIDE
The best kit, the lowest prices

TRIDENT RE-ENTERS THE ATMOSPHERE

Another month, another graphics card to spend your money on...

THE TOP END of the graphics card market is pretty well sorted but there's still plenty of room in the sub-£100 price range. Trident, best known for its mobile graphics solutions, has spotted the gap and has been beavering away on a chip known as XP4, which is set to deliver full DirectX8.1 support with basic DirectX9 functionality on a par performance-wise with the likes of NVIDIA's Ti4200.

One of the things that will make the XP4 so cheap is the transistor count of the GPU itself. Cards such as the Radeon 9700 have 107 million transistors in an area the size of a postage stamp, whereas the new trident chipsets have under a third of that figure –

somewhere in the region of 30 million, putting them on a level with GeForce3 in complexity.

It isn't all about cost-effective gaming however. At a recent meeting with Trident we were shown a number of demos, including its video playback using technology lifted straight out of their top-end DVD decoding equipment. The results were very positive: we have to say what we saw is close to the best of any PC-based solution.

Boards are at least a month off and if you haven't made the leap up to DirectX8 yet the good news is that several companies will be making cards in time for Christmas, as you would expect.



The XP4 could be the card to buy if you're on a budget.

"One of the things that will make the XP4 so cheap is the transistor count of the GPU"

PRIC£WATCH

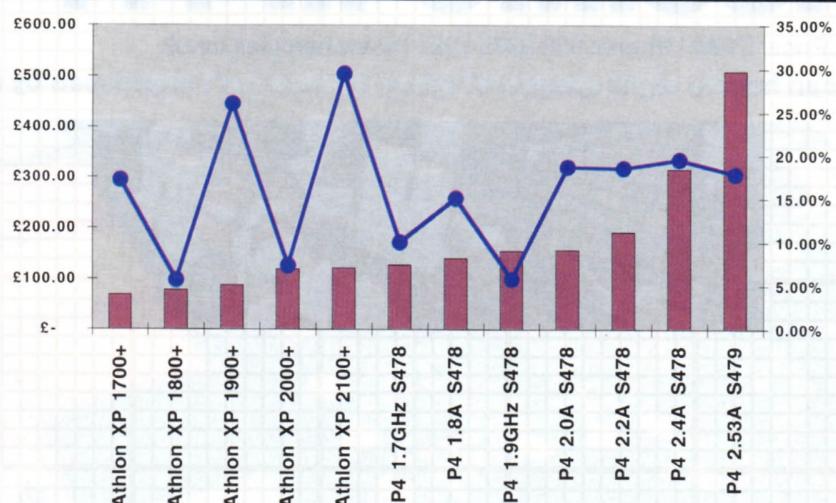
Check the latest price chart and make sure you don't pay over the odds...

MEMORY

More price drops... Pric£watch loves it when he's the bearer of good news. It's tight at the bottom (10p off if you really want to know), but if you're looking for 2100 or 2700 then it's time to buy – any cheaper and they'll be giving it away.



PROCESSORS: PRICE AND PERCENTAGE DROP



PROCESSORS

Big drops this month, just look at the chart for the big spikes. The Athlons are the most aggressive, with huge drops (touching on the 30 per cent

mark) for both the XP 1900 and the XP 2100, but the high-end Intel chips are all down around 20 per cent as well. With new processors coming shortly from

both parties you can expect to see these high-end chips moving down the scale – and dropping in price to boot – before the year's out.

SNIPPETS

MEGAHERTZ MADNESS

As the race to 3Ghz heats up Intel has announced its new processors based on the 533FSB Northwood core. Clocked as high as 2.8Ghz, these new chips are decimating pretty much everything put in front of them including a few dual CPU configurations. As always, prices are high with chips well over the £650 mark, but this in turn means lower-clocked P4s will see price cuts pretty soon.

MIGHTY MOUSE



It seems all the big boys have something new to show this month with Microsoft and Logitech both announcing new peripherals. The new additions to Microsoft's hardware range include corded and cordless versions of a newly designed blue mouse, as well as a multimedia keyboard all of which are available below £50 apiece. Logitech on the other hand has focused its efforts on a new top mouse called the MX500, which to the casual observer looks to be buttonless and a wireless joystick. Both will be on shelves in the next month or so.

AMD'S NEW BABIES

No sooner have rumours of new Intel chips surfaced than AMD announce its new CPUs – the Athlon XP 2400+ and 2600+ clocked at 2Ghz and 2.133Ghz respectively. Although AMD is over 500MHz behind Intel on the numbers, the radical differences in architecture mean that Mhz-for-Mhz comparison isn't really appropriate anyway. The prices of the new AMDs are already touted as being around half of what the top Intel chips will set you back.

OH MOTHER



Chasing hot on the tail of NVIDIA's nForce2 covered over the last couple of issues, VIA is ready with its new KT400 chipset. It offers as many features as NVIDIA's board, with the likes of Serial ATA (Serial IDE) plus USB2.0 and FireWire.

The first batches of boards are likely to come from such manufacturers as ASUS and next month we'll be pitting the best that NVIDIA and VIA have to offer in the first of our quarterly motherboard round-ups.

PHILIPS 180MT

■ Manufacturer: Philips | Price: £1100 | Phone: 020 8689 2166 | www.philips.com

Steve Spence checks out his dream screen

AS WE PROVED

With last month's TFT round-up, flat panel technology is no longer the laggy, blurry mess of two years ago, and now the technology has begun to mature we're seeing a wide selection of spin-offs. This new waif from Philips is ideally suited if you play your games in the bedroom, and it looks a lot like a standard TV set with similar connectivity. Look at the back and you'll find holes for Scart and S-Video connectors and even a socket for your conventional TV aerial, which means you can throw your TV out of the window and pipe all your consoles, your VCR and even digital TV into the back. After a couple of hours use, all we can say is that there's nothing quite like watching *The Simpsons* 'picture-in-picture' while you thrash around on *GTA III*, or casually snipe from the rooftops in *Counter-Strike*.

We'll be the first to admit that these all-in-one solutions are usually a total disaster, with substandard components squeezed together to keep the

cost down, but it's not the case here. The TFT panel is excellent with a great viewing angle and sharp, vibrant colours. Pixel refresh is exemplary with no visible blurring in any of the 3D or video tests and the 2D picture quality approaches our high-end reference screens. The speakers, although slightly tinny, are perfect for normal TV playback, but if you're an aural perfectionist you can always hook everything up through your system speakers. Another bonus is that setting it all up is so easy that even your mum could do it, with the display auto-tuning the RF channels and even supplying Teletext.

The only real drawbacks are the lack of DVI connectivity and the cost, although for your money you're getting an excellent gaming solution as well as a decent quality screen for all your other AV kit.

PCZONE VERDICT **82**

The ultimate all-in-one gaming screen



HERCULES FORTISSIMO III 7.1

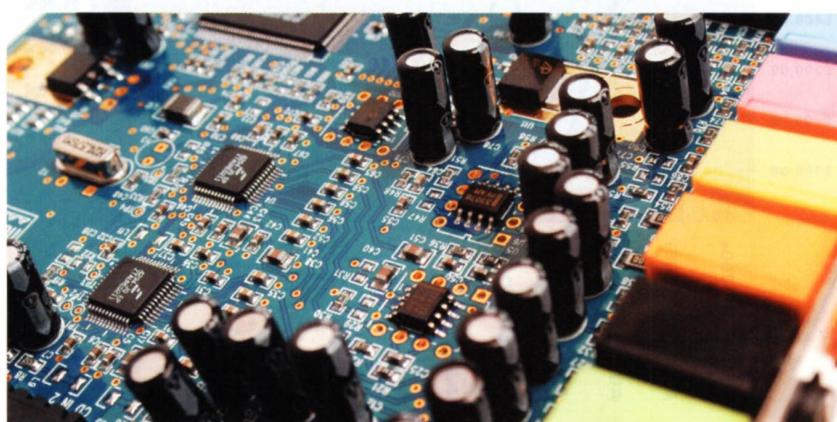
■ Manufacturer: Hercules | Price: £TBA | Phone: 020 8665 1881 | www.hercules.co.uk

A new soundcard that can handle eight speakers? Steve Spence isn't impressed by numbers...

WITH GRAPHICS

cards commanding headlines and stealing more than their fair share of the limelight, soundcard manufacturers like Creative Labs and Hercules are fighting an uphill struggle to sell their latest and greatest wares. We loved the previous Fortissimo cards and the third incarnation sticks to the path of progress and replaces the Fortissimo II Digital Edition reviewed a couple of months back.

The Fortissimo III is built around the same chipset, but the new card is compatible with Dolby Digital EX, which means (drum roll) it can handle the new 7.1 speaker standard. Of course, as is the nature of technology, you're not going to find any DVDs or games which utilise the new



standard and, scarily, at the time of writing there aren't any PC-specific 7.1 speaker solutions on the market. One of the reasons is that a 7.1 system needs to be

driven by equipment that's powerful and flexible enough to spread the seven sound sources out and current gaming speakers just don't cut it. This is something

that could really hamper any progression up from 5.1 in the foreseeable future.

As with the previous two Fortissimos though, gaming

performance is great – although it's a little disappointing to see no advances have been made to reduce CPU utilisation. As long as Hercules sticks to the same audio processor on its cards, this will unfortunately always be the case.

Overall, while the Fortissimo III 7.1 is a worthwhile successor to the Fortissimo II DE, we think you'd do better snapping up a Fortissimo II when the prices drop. At present there is no call for an eight speaker solution, and there's very little else new being brought to the table here.

PCZONE VERDICT

77

Whistles and bells abound



SAMSUNG

DigitAll wow

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EXCALIBUR RADEON 9000 PRO

■ Manufacturer: Hightech | Price: £83 | Phone: 01252 812 322 | www.hightech.com.hk

At less than £100, Steve Spence proves it's worth shopping around before splashing out on a new graphics card

WE KNOW we keep banging on about the merits of the upcoming 3D cards from NVIDIA (the NV30) and Radeon (9700), but we're also well aware that if you don't get them sent through the post free of charge, for 'testing purposes', you're probably not going to be able to afford the £300+ price tag. Unfortunately, until recently the only choices around the £100 mark were boards based on Radeon 7500 and GeForce4MX, which don't cut the mustard with DirectX8 games.

Luckily, every time someone releases a new high-end chip, a more mainstream release tends to follow, which is exactly what you've got here. It's a slightly simplified version of the Radeon 8500, which still takes you up to the full DX8.1 feature set. The good news is that the Hightech Excalibur is easily the cheapest DX8 board you can buy, and with 64Mb of memory, it's pretty much identical to the ATI reference design. As with all current gaming parts from ATI and NVIDIA, the board has DVI,

VGA and s-video connectivity and is capable of supporting multiple displays.

Unfortunately, the image quality wasn't brilliant, with some minor interference visible on both the DVI and VGA connectors. It might have only been slight, but it could prove quite annoying with extended use. The overall performance was better, but at higher resolutions the card loses out to everything including the MX440.



Wolfenstein scores told the same story with respectable scores at 1024x768, but at 1280x1024 it slips behind the older DirectX7 NVIDIA part, which shows its only real weakness – intensive texturing.

Despite these criticisms, the card still provides excellent value for money, and if you're in

desperate need of a DX8/8.1

card and can't afford the card below, then look no further.

PCZONE VERDICT

83

As cheap as it gets

VERTO TI4200

■ Manufacturer: PNY | Price: £129.99 | Phone: 01784 224 200 | www.pny-europe.com

If you're after the perfect price and performance solution, Steve Spence has the answer

PNY MAY BE better known for its memory products, but since the arrival of the GeForce4 it's been taking on the big boys with its new range of Verto consumer graphics cards. This card sticks to NVIDIA's reference design, as does pretty much every other card out there, and comes with 64Mb of fast DDR memory clocked at 250MHz (500MHz effective). In quite a stark contrast to almost every other Ti4200 board on the market, every board in the Verto GeForce4Ti range comes with RAMSINKS as standard, which is a superb addition if you're into overclocking.

All the whistles and bells of the faster Ti4600 are here, including LightSpeed Memory

Architecture II and Accuview Antialiasing, and if you have a second screen kicking around, the board is nView capable, delivering cloned or spanned desktops which can be used for desktop and gaming alike.

One of the other nice little touches is the inclusion of the necessary DVI-to-VGA dongle to allow the DVI connector to support a second VGA-based display which, although cheap for companies to add, is sorely missing from a large proportion of the cards on the market.

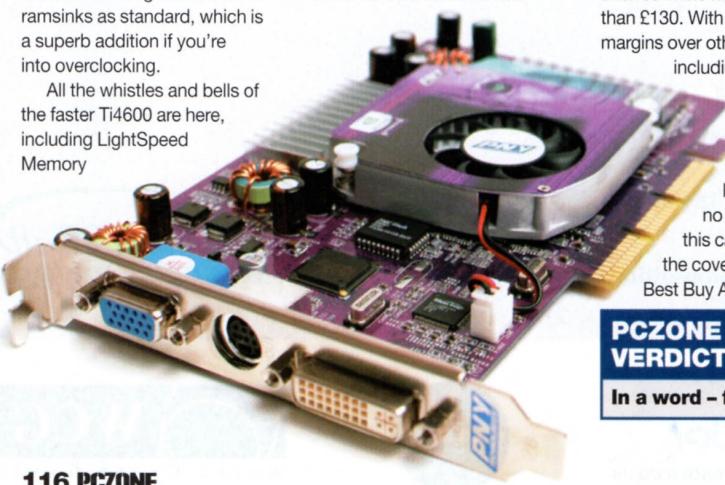
Performance figures in *Unreal Tournament 2003* were nothing short of excellent – coming within 10 per cent of the Ti4600; at lower resolutions the PNY outdid everything, including the new ATI R9000. As you can see from the *Wolfenstein* scores, the Ti4200 doesn't suffer from any of the texturing bottlenecks seen on the cheaper ATI chip.

Considering the high price of some of the offerings based on this GPU, it's surprising to hear that you can pick this up off the shelves in the high street for less than £130. With such convincing margins over other cards,

including the Hercules Radeon 9000 (reviewed last month) and costing £10 less, we've got no problem in giving this card its fair dues – the coveted PC ZONE Best Buy Award.

PCZONE VERDICT **92**

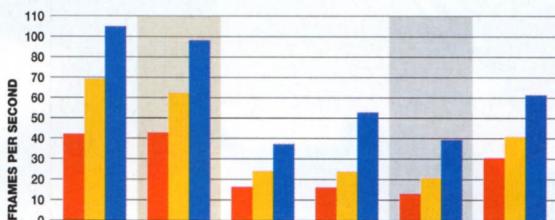
In a word – fantastic



BENCHMARKS

THANKS TO EPIC, WE'RE THE FIRST MAGAZINE IN THE WORLD TO HAVE ACCESS TO THE BRAND NEW UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2003 BENCHMARKING SOFTWARE, WHICH GIVES YOU THE BEST INDICATION OF HOW YOUR CARD IS GOING TO PERFORM IN THE FUTURE.

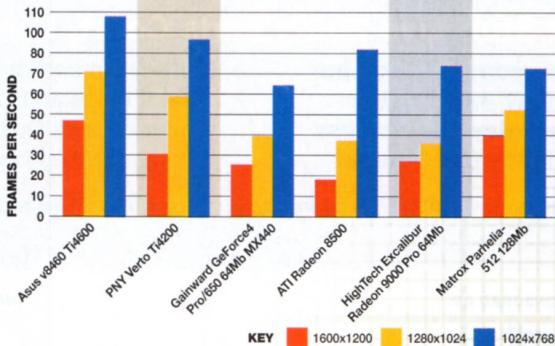
UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2003 (2X AA) FLYBY



UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2003 (2X AA) BOTMATCH



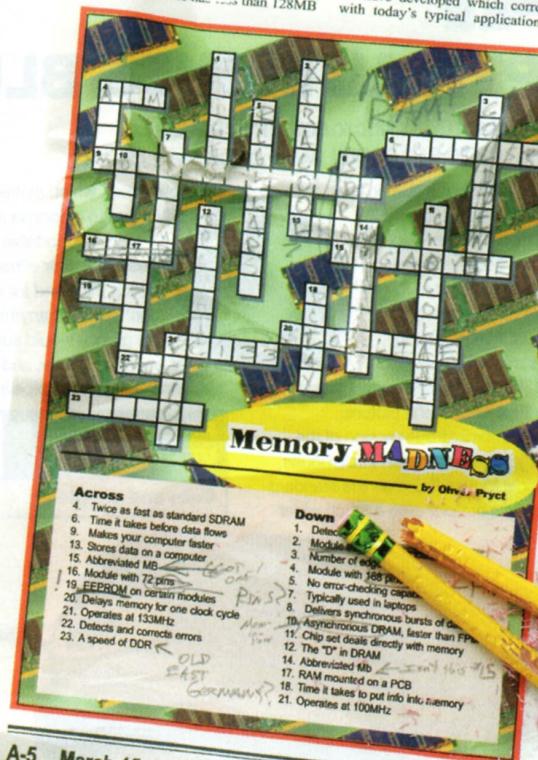
RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN CHECKPOINT (2XAA)





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A-5 March 15, 2001

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MOUSE TRAP

Thinking of getting a new graphics card? Hold up, there might be something a lot cheaper that will boost your performance even more

	MS INTELLIMOUSE EXPLORER OPTICAL V3
	MICROSOFT OPTICAL MOUSE BLUE
	LOGITECH DUAL OPTICAL
	LOGITECH MX500
	BELKIN NOSTROMO N30
	SAITEK TOUCH FORCE OPTICAL
	GYRATION ULTRA

OK, SO you've bought yourself the latest graphics card, and thanks to last month's TFT round-up picked yourself up a nice flat panel. However, you're still getting '0wn3d' in pretty much every game you play and you don't have the foggiest idea why... Maybe you're just rubbish, or, it could be a simple, but nasty, case of *rodente retardus*, aka a dodgy mouse. This means that your über-system, the one you've spent hundreds of thousands of pounds on isn't delivering because you're too tight to splash out on a decent mouse, which is probably the cheapest component in your system. Shame on you.

Of course as soon as you decide to buy something decent where do you turn? It's not just a case of picking something with a ball and two buttons, you've got optical and mechanical options with anything up to five buttons and optional extras like force feedback and wireless functionality to consider. So let us point you in the direction of the best gaming mouse money can buy.

INTELLIMOUSE EXPLORER OPTICAL V3

■ Manufacturer: Microsoft | Price: £44.99
Phone: 0870 6010100 | www.microsoft.co.uk

As the 2002 replacement for the original Explorer, the Intellimouse Explorer v3 is the mouse we've been using in the office and it's never let us down. It's not just us though, go to any CPL-style LAN tournament and you'll see more Explorer v3s than anything else.

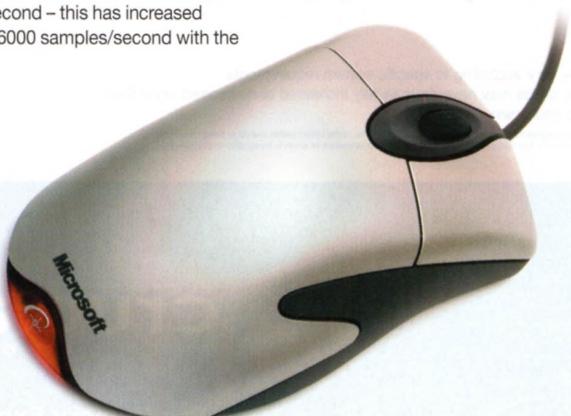
On top of the obvious cosmetic attraction, an improved shape and upgraded optical sensor make the Explorer 3.0 one of the most comfortable high-accuracy pointing devices you can buy.

The original optical Explorer mouse had a sample rate of around 1500 samples/second – this has increased fourfold to 6000 samples/second with the



PCZONE VERDICT
Simply the best

91



OPTICAL MOUSE BLUE

■ Manufacturer: Microsoft | Price: £29.99
Phone: 0870 6010100 | www.microsoft.co.uk

Although all eyes may be on the rather shiny silver top-end mouse below, not everyone needs five buttons with two optical sensors and a portable back-scratcher, especially if your gaming focus is more RTS- or RPG-related. That's where the new Optical Mouse Blue fits into the picture.

As an ambidextrous version of the original 'jellybean-shaped' Intellimouse, the Optical Mouse Blue has the standard left and right buttons plus a much wider

clickable wheel, which makes a surprising difference to response and control.

It's more comfortable than the Dual Optical or either Saitek or Belkin mice and for under £30 we don't know of anything better.

This mouse would suit any casual or weekend gamer, and there's a wireless version in the pipeline too.



PCZONE VERDICT

Cute and simple

83



DUAL OPTICAL

■ Manufacturer: Logitech | Price: £39.99
Phone: 01753 870 900 | www.logitech.com

What could be better than one optical sensor on the bottom of your mouse? How about two? Well not necessarily, but that's the tack Logitech are following with their Dual Optical. Rather than have one super high-res optical sensor and LED, the Dual Optical has two slightly lower-rated 'eyes' which increase resolution.

The technology is sound, but the shape and button configuration are way off the standard set by Logitech's other mice, or top-tier Microsoft. With one button less, you're going to have to sacrifice something in the way of control, and the overall experience feels like a step backwards from standard ball-mice.

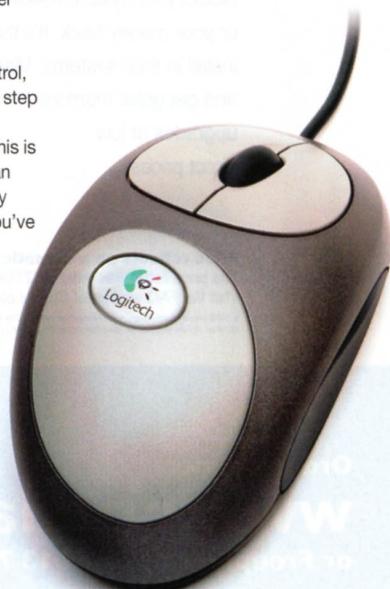
Price is important though and as this is anything from £10 to £15 cheaper than the Microsoft Intellimouse V3 on many online stores, it's a decent option if you've

got small hands and you don't need the extra controls. When you consider the Microsoft Optical Blue is available for a tenner less though, you'd be best off sticking with the evil empire.

PCZONE VERDICT

A little disappointing

76



MX500

■ Manufacturer: Logitech | Price: TBA
Phone: 01753 870 900 | www.logitech.com

This is the newest corded mouse from Logitech and it addresses a lot of the problems that gamers had with its previous offerings as well as bringing a few new ideas to the party. It's got just the one higher-rated optical sensor, but it feels more responsive and it didn't exhibit any of the jittering we saw from its sibling. The fifth button is present too and the

general shape is much better, fitting comfortably into the hand without the pronounced and slightly uncomfortable badge seen on other models.

Another nice touch is the 'hidden' buttons. Rather than make the buttons separate, the top of the mouse is slightly flexible and the entire regions to the left and right of the wheel are clickable. It looks and feels slightly odd at first but after about an hour we found ourselves completely at home.

It isn't all about gaming however – surrounding the wheel are dedicated scroll buttons which let you scroll up and down lines, or pages at a time. There's also a third button dedicated to task switching which emulates Alt+Tab – handy for surfing the Web or general Windows work. All in all an excellent mouse and a clear second place to the Explorer v3.

PCZONE
VERDICT

85

A serious contender



TOUCH FORCE OPTICAL

■ Manufacturer: Saitek | Price: £39.99
Phone: N/A | www.saitek.com

The Touch Force Optical might look like your average run-of-the mill mouse but nothing could be further from the truth. As the name suggests, this three-button wheel mouse uses an optical technology, much like most of the other mice on test, but it also comes with a technology normally associated with gamepads – force feedback.

At first the experience is quite novel. Jaunting around in the supplied copy of MDK2, the 'recoil' and sensations when attacked add a slight edge to the gameplay, but after prolonged gameplay we found ourselves switching the rumble motor off. Recoil on a joypad is good but feedback on a mouse actually hampers gameplay and can actually prove a major disadvantage in games like Quake III. We can't think of anything worse than having your target thrown askew from recoil or even worse, being unable to return fire because you can't aim straight in a firefight.

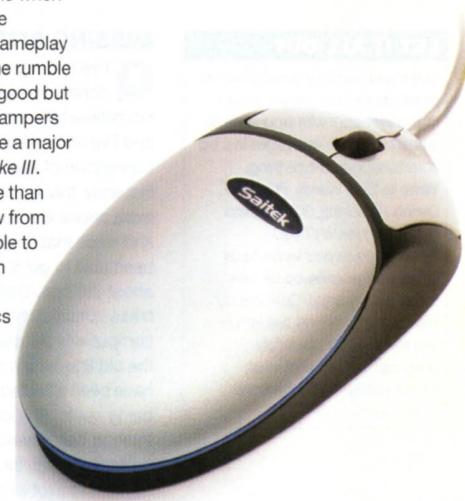
Added to this, the ergonomics of the mouse make it

uncomfortable with the protruding overhang at the rear. Overall, although a competent three-button affair for general desktop use, we expected more from a company who have dominated the PC game controller market so strongly.

PCZONE
VERDICT

70

More gimmick, less gamer



NOSTROMO N30

■ Manufacturer: Belkin | Price: £35
Phone: 00 8 002 235 5460 | www.belkin.co.uk

The first thing that strikes you about the Belkin Nostromo n30 is its shape – we're sure we've seen it on the set of *Doctor Who* – and with the styling seemingly weighted to function over form we hoped this would be reflected in the gaming tests. Unfortunately, being a ball-mouse and the only mechanical offering, it was at an immediate disadvantage, especially when tested against the best Microsoft and Logitech products. The wheel isn't clickable so even with the oddly placed side 'trigger' the mouse only has three buttons which seems to betray one of the few requirements that the target audience of hardcore gamers are crying out for.

Pointer accuracy is pretty high but after a couple of hours use we started to

get clogged up with dust, which led to a couple of moments of frustration and one incident of almost total pointer paralysis.

Ultimately Optical technology has arguably superceded mechanical mice – even the likes of the Karna Razer Boomslang are unable to compete with present day top-end optical offerings. Costing more than the Wheel Mouse Blue but delivering significantly less, we'd find it hard to justify Belkin's newest baby over any of the other mice on show.

PCZONE
VERDICT

62

Dare we say ugly?



ULTRA

■ Manufacturer: Gyration | Price: £79.99
Phone: N/A | www.gyration.com

New technologies get letterboxed quite quickly as either being pretty useful or a total gimmick, and the Ultra from Gyration is no exception. As a wireless mouse we expected the usual lag and inaccuracy seen in units that rely on radio waves, and were pretty excited to find these expectations were as far from the mark as is possible.

Based on a new radio technology with a 25m range, the Gyration sends 80 positional updates per second, almost three times the 30Hz radio rate of the newest Microsoft mice. This combined with an extremely high-res optical sensor meant gaming was as fluid and lag-free as any of the wired mice.

It doesn't stop there, and nor should it for nearly £80, on top of the two buttons and clickable wheel the Gyration Ultra is also capable of operating in mid-air. A button on the bottom of the mouse switches from the optical sensor to the internal gyroscope, and the slightest hand

movements are replicated with ease and precision on screen. Again we were quite sceptical but after an hour's gaming the benefits, especially when doing things such as sniping, were pretty clear.

The mouse is rechargeable and comes with both a docking pod as well as a battery casing, which can use standard AAA batteries, meaning you can always have a back-up on standby. At the end of the day this mouse isn't for everyone, costing almost double the price of the Explorer v3. There isn't quite enough here to justify the money but if you've got your heart set on wireless then this is the mouse for you.

PCZONE
VERDICT

79

Unique but quite pricey





DEAR WANDY

Think your PC is about as much use as a one-legged man in an arse-kicking contest? Tell Wandy, he'll kiss it and make things all better

■ LOVE DOCTOR Phil Wand

LET IT ALL OUT

Share your techie or gaming-related problems with us, and we, in turn, may well share it with thousands of readers via these very pages in a big communal love-in-type thing.

Write to Dear Wandy, PC ZONE, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1T 4JD

Email Address your letters to us at letters@pczone.co.uk with the subject heading 'Dear Wandy'. Please note: while we can assure you that we read absolutely every techie query sent to us, we are unable to offer personal replies. Sorry.

MISSING BITS

Q I've had my Internet connection with Freeserve Hometime for a while now, and I've always had a decent connection of about 48Kbps. Recently, though, we had an extra phone line fitted at home, and since that time I've only been able to get a connection of about 28Kbps. Dialling in also takes considerably longer. My computer is still connected to the old line, which shouldn't have been affected by a new line being put in. Any ideas why my Internet has slowed down would be appreciated, as downloading now takes a lot longer.

David Meadows

A Common problem. You need to phone BT and ask if your lines now use Digital Access Carrier System and, if so, could they please desist. DACS is used to increase the capacity of cabling by multiplexing two analogue lines onto a single copper wire: BT were no doubt unable to locate a suitable pair going back to the exchange, and rather than dig up the road (expensive) DACS-ed your line instead (cheap). The trouble for you is that V.90 modems hate DACS with a vengeance and won't be able to talk any faster than 33.6Kbps. If you're getting less than this, my advice would be to demote your modem to its V.34 configuration as, that way, you'll get the maximum out of the modified line. Sadly, BT is under no obligation to run new cables, and unless you stated in your original request that you use a V.90 modem, there's no reason for them not to use DACS. Be aware that neither ISDN nor ADSL lines can have DACS used on them.

TELLYTRUBLE

Q I'm looking for some help. I'll soon be getting a new PC, and with it I'm looking for a good TFT monitor. My choices

are a Samsung SM171P or an iiyama 4315. Are these any good, or can you recommend better ones? Also, I was wondering if I should go for a widescreen TV instead for the same price. £600 can get me a 24in TV but I'm not sure if the quality will be any good as a PC monitor. I plan to watch TV and use my console on the monitor anyway, and getting a nice telly will save me 100 quid. Can you tell me what type of TV I should look for (high refresh rate and so on), and if it will be any good as a computer monitor?

Selim

A Despite its size, a 24in PAL telly comprises 625 horizontal lines (525 in the United States) and is very low definition when compared to even the cheapest computer monitor. While DivX video rips may rise above the mediocre in terms of visual quality, when it comes to browsing the Web, composing emails or using a word processor, you'll find yourself squinting and cursing at blurred and flickering images. Try anything above a measly 640 x 480 resolution and you'll give yourself a migraine. And while recent GeForce cards allow you to trail an S-Video cable from the back of your PC to your TV, unless the signal can be switched between PAL and NTSC (ie between the respective UK and US television formats) there's a high chance of

you seeing things in black and white – and blurred and flickering. So don't even consider it as an option, and get yourself that TFT monitor instead.

The iiyama gets my recommendation, but if you went for the slightly more expensive 4332 model (which won our Best Buy award last month) you can view your desktop in both portrait and landscape. You simply twist the screen clockwise to switch between the two modes. If you code software, write stuff lots, or use a page layout package like QuarkXPress, such functionality is invaluable.

ANTIQUES ROADSHOW

Q After reading through the last issue of ZONE, I sat down and said to myself, "Laurence, why are you still reading this? Your decrepit computer is knackered and can't even run any of the games that are being reviewed, so why bother paying the cover price each month?" And so I found myself facing two options. First option: I could stop reading your magazine, stop playing computer games and get a life. Second option: I could upgrade my PC, keep reading your magazine, become a failure and enjoy every minute of it. You'll be glad to hear that I decided on the second of the two options, and this in turn caused me to write to you. But please don't laugh as I know my computer is something to be ashamed of (an original Pentium 200, 64Mb RAM, SiS 5595 motherboard, and a 32Mb ATI video card). Due to my lack of computer understanding I do not want to buy a new motherboard and construct a new PC. I

know my motherboard will only go up to 533MHz and 256Mb RAM so please answer me this: will upgrading the processor and RAM to the above mentioned limits and buying a bad-ass GeForce4 enable me to play *Allied Assault* or *Alien Versus Predator 2* without too much jerkvision? I know I won't be able to play *Unreal II* or anything similar, but will this give my arthritic PC one last sprint? Oh, and one final question: will fitting extra RAM and the processor be a simple 'slot-in' job, or do I have to update the BIOS? Any comments would be much appreciated.

Laurence

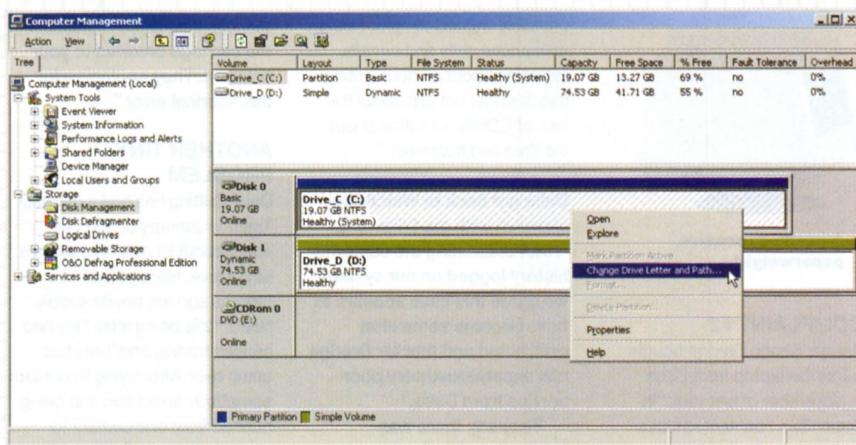
A Alas, your self-proclaimed lack of understanding has thwarted me. The SiS 5595 you refer to in your letter is actually the *chipset* of your motherboard, not the motherboard itself. This chipset forms the heart and soul of your machine, controlling how data flows between all the bits and pieces and peripherals that together form the guts of your PC. The SiS 5595 is not unique to one product and can be found on a wide range of old motherboards, and it would be slap-happy of me to guess which one might be yours. However, I can say with some certainty that whatever board it is, it isn't going to run *Allied Assault* or *Alien Vs Predator 2* smoothly at all (heck, my 1.5GHz P4 still has the odd wobble). Even the most powerful member of the GeForce4 family is going to act like it's drowning whatever CPU you crowbar inside, and there's a chance it may not work at all if you don't have an AGP interface. The sad truth is that for modern games you need modern hardware, and for that you need money. As is the case in so many circumstances, my advice is to hold off doing anything

"A PAL telly is low definition even when compared to the cheapest monitor"



The iiyama 4315 is a top-ranking TFT screen. You ought to want one.

"The sad truth is that for modern games you need modern hardware, and for that you need money"



Using the Disk Management console in Windows 2000 Professional.

until you have sufficient funds – probably around £300 to £400 – to buy a new motherboard, new video card, and new memory.

MISSING HARD ONE

Recently my father bought me additional hard drive space and after a successful install we had a new, formatted, fully recognised 80Gb drive inside our system. Full of excitement we loaded up Windows, checking on the boot screen that it had recognised its new Primary Master (it had). After loading we went to My Computer. Unfortunately, Windows had no indication that our new hard drive was even there. We had our old disc connected as a Primary Slave for drive C: but our new one wasn't anywhere to be seen. It seems that low down our PC can read the drive, but Windows can't. Please help as I have around 20 games but can only have about six installed at one time!

Graham

A Two things. First, I don't know why you changed your existing drive from primary master to primary slave. While it will still work, convention dictates that your first or boot drive is set to master, not to mention that you should never go changing something if you know it works! Disturbing cables from interfaces and swapping over jumpers when there is no

need to do so will only create problems for you later. Second, if you're using an older operating system such as Windows 98 you'll need to make sure you've run FDISK before FORMAT. The former utility partitions your new drive into usable space, and will then add new drive letters accordingly (your new 80Gb drive should appear as drive D: when you quit FDISK and reboot). If you use a more recent version of Windows such as 2000 Professional, you will need to right-click the My Computer icon on your desktop and choose Manage from the menu that appears. Click on the folder entitled Disk Management, highlight your new drive by left clicking on its representation, then right-click and choose New Volume. Follow the wizard, using Windows online help where necessary, to add a new drive.

SHORTER CUT

Q Nice little techie info you supplied us readers back in PCZ #118, but you forgot one other



Many cards now feature digital outs for connection to TFT screens like the iiyama 4332.

method of cutting and pasting. If you want to do it a little quicker than using keyboard combinations, you can always use the method to which I've become accustomed: clicking and holding the left mouse button, then pressing and hold either the CTRL key (to copy) or the ALT (to create a short cut). One other trick I like to use to display the Properties page for an object is to hold ALT and double-click the offending item.

Brad

A Like many folks, I knew that holding down CTRL and ALT modified the behaviour of drag and drop, but I didn't know that holding down ALT when you double-click brought up the Properties page. Did you know that ALT and ENTER did the same thing? And is there an infinite number of ways to perform the same task in Windows?

CORRECTED VISION

Q I've been trying to buy a VisionTek XSTASY GeForce4 Ti4600 for the last couple of months, and after searching the Web and making numerous calls, I've discovered that this card

is apparently only available outside Europe, VisionTek has gone bust here and Man Machine (who was the sole distributor for the card) is pushing a PNY GeForce4 Ti4600 as replacement. My question is, do you recommend this card as a substitute for the VisionTek XSTASY GeForce4 Ti4600? If not, should I try and source a Ti4600 from the States? Bear in mind I want the best Graphics card that money can buy.

Richard Pedzinski

A Vision Tek has indeed gone pop and we've now installed a new card as our Best Buy. It is a PNY card but it's the 4200 which is a hell of a lot cheaper than the 4600 that you're being offered. You can find a review of the 4200 on page 116 if you want to know more about it. The 4600 isn't a bad card, in fact it's the best of the GeForce 4 family but it costs a lot more than the 4200 and doesn't offer a massive leap in performance. **WZ**

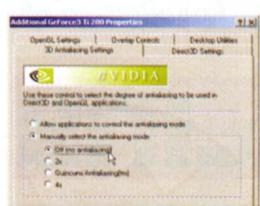
SPUDD-WE-LIKE

To get maximum performance in the latest games (unless one is fortunate enough to have the latest GeForce100 Megaturbo 9), a little look at the Advanced Display Properties tab is beneficial. (While the following applies only to owners of NVIDIA cards, the principles can easily be employed with a little common sense and cards from other manufacturers.) First of all, you will want to turn off that extremely intensive feature known as antialiasing. At its most basic, antialiasing smooths out the jagged edges of 3D objects. Most video cards anti-alias by a process known as super-sampling – rendering a scene internally at twice or more the screen resolution, then shrinking the new image back. To disable this feature, right-click the desktop and select Properties, then Settings, then Advanced. Look for a tab with the name of your card and click Additional Properties. Select Manually, select the antialiasing mode, then Off (no antialiasing).

Another option that the budding gamer should be aware of is V-Sync. This is literally the synchronising of your game FPS (frames per second) with the refresh rate of your monitor. If your monitor is only refreshing at 60Hz, even if your graphics card is capable of 300 FPS, with V-Sync on you are not going to get more than 60 FPS. So why not just turn off V-Sync? Well, if V-Sync is simply turned off on a system where FPS outweighs refresh rate, a phenomenon known as tearing occurs. This is a shimmering effect, whereby the top of the screen appears to update faster than the bottom. The best way to approach V-Sync is to decide if you have a game that feels sluggish (ie lacking FPS) and, if so, turn V-Sync off. Right-click the desktop and select Properties, then Settings, then Advanced. Again look for the tab with the name of your card and click Additional Properties. If the game is a Direct3D game, go to Direct3D Settings, More Direct3D, then set Vertical Sync Mode to Always off. If the game is an OpenGL game, go to OpenGL Settings and set Vertical Sync to Always off. If you don't know whether your game is OpenGL or Direct3D, you are stupid and should kill yourself. Or just do both OpenGL and Direct3D to make sure.

Spudd

Wandy says: these tricks can make a real difference. Have 49 pounds and 100 pence compensation for all the typing you did.



Antialiasing can be a bit of a drag, so turn it off.



WATCHDOG

Another month, another sackful of complaints from readers about dodgy customer services. Time to right those wrongs again then...

■ WRITING THE WRONGS Adam Phillips

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!

Don't worry - we're here to help when you've reached the end of your tether. If you've got a consumer issue that needs addressing then drop us a line.

WRITE TO Watchdog, PC ZONE, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London, W1T 4JD

EMAIL Alternatively, email us at letters@pczone.co.uk with the subject heading 'Watchdog'

READ ME!

If you are writing in to complain about a product, please supply us with your full name, address and contact number. With PCs, make sure that you also include all purchasing details such as reference and invoice numbers.

"I decided to e-mail and phone Dabs after the sixth week, but it's like they don't exist"

DABS-OLICAL!

It's rare to receive quite so many complaints about one company but some disgruntled readers are seemingly sick to the back teeth of Dabs...

COMPLAINT #1

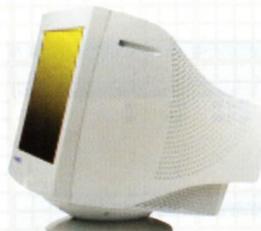
Reader Gary Deleny ordered a DabsValue monitor from the company. One week after receiving it, the monitor started losing colour - areas that should have been white shifted to yellow and back again. He requested a replacement from Dabs and the monitor was duly dispatched. A week later, the same monitor was returned but with a note saying that they could find no fault. "The monitor seemed OK for a while but is now showing the exact same fault," explains Gary.

So he e-mailed Dabs who replied with: "We have tested this and we didn't find a fault, unfortunately we can not offer a return." Gee, what a useful response. Understandably, Gary is now utterly hacked off: "I am stuck with a monitor I have paid for which doesn't work," he fumes. "I am at the end of my tether and the company now refuses to even look at the goods, so I am stuck with having to purchase another monitor."

He personally believes that the problem is to do with the monitor overheating and that Dabs's test procedure wasn't comprehensive enough.

Well, Dabs do indeed confirm that the monitor was returned and tested, and no fault was found. They claim that because of your letter to us, which highlights the possibility of a heat-related problem, "we suggest that the panel is returned for extended testing," offered a spokesperson for the company. "We will provide a refund or replacement to bring this matter to a speedy conclusion should the test confirm the fault."

Why they couldn't have suggested this to you in the first place without us pulling them up is beyond us.



A pretty expensive paperweight.

COMPLAINT #2

Reader Simon Dredge bought a Toshiba laptop from Dabs in November of last year. "In December, I contacted Dabs because the DVD/CDRW would not write any disks," explains Simon. "They passed me on to Toshiba who established that the drive supplied was not a DVD/CDRW drive but a DVD-only drive. They asked me to contact Dabs to return the laptop for replacement of the drive."

He contacted Dabs by phone at the beginning of January. After a couple of e-mails, he arranged for collection: "specifying to avoid 3-3.30pm due to the school run. They turned up at 3.15, so I contacted Omega (the carrier) three times but never had my call returned."

He contacted Dabs again but got no response from them: "I then e-mailed Sean Archer at Toshiba who was a great help. Over the next two months, he would e-mail S Minshull, the customer service manager at Dabs, almost every week asking him to contact me. Sean would get a reply from Minshull saying I would be contacted. He would then call me to check if I had been contacted, but I never was. I tried e-mailing Minshull directly but never got a reply."

Simon has had his laptop for seven months now. He first contacted Dabs six months ago about the problem: "I have

probably wasted ten plus hours with phone calls and e-mails, including about an hour writing this. It's now not just about the lack of CDRW - it's also about the time and frustration."

Dabs got back to Watchdog

sharpish with the following: "After examining the customer history logged on our system, we agree this case appears to have become somewhat protracted and that Mr Dredge has experienced very poor service from Dabs."

They say there was originally confusion in determining whether the reason for the return was due to a fault "or, as has since been confirmed, the model was incorrectly supplied."

They do say that from their end, they raised another seven return numbers, but it would appear you never received these, Simon. "However, we sympathise wholeheartedly with Mr Dredge's dilemma and have taken immediate action to bring this to a swift resolve."

They say they'll refund in full and offer sincere apologies for all the inconvenience.

COMPLAINT #3

This is a simple story really - reader Stuart Delaney's five day old monitor bought from Dabs blew up. He contacted Dabs demanding a full refund and they eventually agreed to pick up the monitor. Stuart in turn agreed to pay the cost of the return which he assumed he would receive back once the monitor had been found to be faulty. He did receive a full refund but there has been no sign of the return costs.

"I don't want much as the postage was only £13.80 but it is the principle, as they are basically denying me what I am entitled to," explains Stuart.

"The return of Mr Delaney's monitor was mistakenly logged on our system using an incorrect internal code which resulted in the customer being charged carriage," came back Dabs's response. They say that

this has now been rectified and the carriage credited to your account. They apologise for the "clerical error."

ANOTHER TINY PROBLEM

Dave Cutting has had a gutful of Tiny: "In January of 2001 we spent about £1,100 on a system," says Dave. He says that two months ago the power supply failed: "This being after Tiny had ceased trading and Time had taken over. After trying to contact somebody about this and being pushed from one contact to another, we were finally told they couldn't source the power supply and if we wanted to fix our system we would have to buy an alternative. As it was different, this would entail purchasing a complete casing as well for the princely sum of £60 - when a power supply should be £20-30!"

After reluctantly ordering, Dave waited three weeks for the thing to be delivered, only to discover the carton contained an empty tower unit, with no power supply. "We then had the pleasure of trying to recontact them - have you ever tried? It's worse than NTL," fumes Dave. "However, we eventually managed to speak to someone and arranged for the casing to be picked up and returned with the power supply installed."

Obviously Dave now had the pleasure of transferring all the innards to the new casing. "After spending several hours doing this, we found the new power supply didn't work," says Dave.

When he finally got through, he was told their system was down and they couldn't do anything. "My wife asked the guy to ring her back once the system was up, but they didn't ring back," rants Dave. "Never again will I buy a system from a company like this - all they're interested in is moving stock. Once it comes to back up and customer service, forget it."

We contacted Time who said they were unable to resolve your problem immediately because you were on your

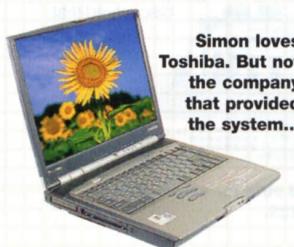
THE ACCUSED

dabs
@com

komplett.co.uk
a part of Norkom

Tiny

GUILTY UNTIL PROVEN INNOCENT



Simon loves Toshiba. But not the company that provided the system...



SAINTS NOT SINNERS

CRUCIAL
Technology
Division of Micron

▲ EVEN A BLIND SQUIRREL FINDS AN ACORN EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE...

"Outstanding and prompt customer service" as well as "they are a credit to the industry." Blimey, excuse Watchdog while it staggers back to its feet after receiving those comments from reader Russ Welsh about Crucial Technology. We're not used to hearing such praise down here in the kennels. Russ explains the reason for his positive rantings: "After having some problems getting some compatible 512Mb memory strips for my home built PC and its irksome motherboard, and having returned three different makes to various outlets, I decided to try Crucial with their on-line ordering system," says Russ.

Two days later his memory arrived and was promptly installed only to give him the familiar blue screen on boot. Russ explains: "I contacted their telephone support and explained the problem to a very helpful operator who immediately recognised what the problem was and arranged to ship an alternate type of memory which arrived two days later. This indeed solved the problem."

Such speedy service has impressed Russ no end. So we're more than happy to give Crucial a mention because of it. Good work, fellas. Now, Russ, we're assuming you're not an employee of theirs...

holiday, Dave. Thankfully though, the company got back to us on your return with the following explanation: "Initially we tested Dave's power supply and found it not to be faulty, therefore we decided to bring his base unit in for inspection," said a spokesperson for Time. "On inspection we found there to be a motherboard fault. We offered Dave a repair or a reduced price upgrade - he took the upgrade and has purchased a new motherboard, processor and more memory."

KOMPLETT KRAP?

Reader Pete Ayres writes "about the woes" he's been having with mail order parts company, Komplett. "Several weeks ago, I ordered a Plexitor CD writer and an upgrade kit consisting of a new motherboard, a Duron 1.3 GHz and 128Mb of SDRAM. Both were really good value, the upgrade kit being only £135, so I ordered them immediately."

As soon as they arrived, he installed the kit only to find something was wrong. Pete sent it back to Komplett "with a promise of a repair or refund."

"A week and a half after the parcel was sent to them, I'd heard nothing, so wrote to them," explains Pete. "They said my item would be inspected "early next week." This was too long for me to be deprived of my PC, so I asked for a full refund. They replied saying they would refund all items found faulty."

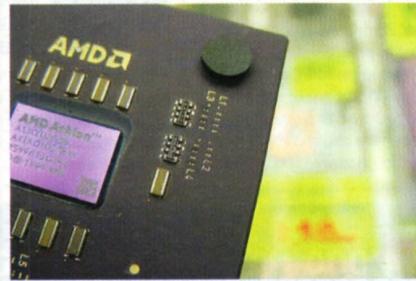
The time lag irritated Pete so much that he decided to get his PC upgraded by a local company instead, albeit at greater cost. "Eventually, Komplett's test results returned declaring the motherboard faulty. I then

received an e-mail saying the replacement parts would all be shipped back to me!"

He wrote back pointing out that he had asked for a refund and the next day he received an e-mail saying that the CPU had been refunded - "which wasn't even the part that was broken!"

Pete subsequently wrote to them again asking for a full refund on the bundle. "Today I received an e-mail which informed me that Komplett would "only refund unused or faulty items." As I see it, the item was a bundle including all the components, not just the one part, and it was faulty. Altogether, they have been a Komplett and utter pain in the arse!"

Off Watchdog went to growl at Komplett. They got back to us immediately: "We have now set things straight and have informed the customer that his credit card is credited for the entire amount," said a company spokesperson. "This is not something we are obliged to do but we have done so in this case simply because we like to have as many pleased customers as possible." PW



The Duron CPU - nothing wrong with it but Komplett still offered a refund...

another WAR

THE FIRST RPG TO BE SET DURING WWII



- another publisher
- another developer
- another war

 MIRAGE

 CENEGA



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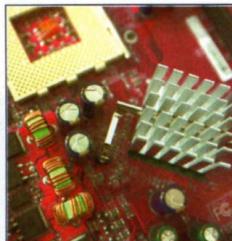
CENEGA UK, 32 ABIGAIL CRESCENT, WALDERSLADE, KENT ME5 9DZ
TEL/FAX: +44 (0)17 95 429 486

BUYER'S GUIDE

Are you looking to upgrade your PC? Since we've started this Buyer's Guide, prices have dropped consistently every month – and we'll keep on checking to ensure that this guide gives you the most accurate and up-to-date information. While we're on the subject, memory is dirt cheap as well – if you're still labouring with less than 128Mb RAM, buy some now

◀ BEST BUY ▶

MOTHERBOARD



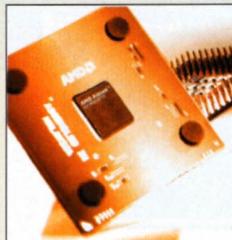
MSI K7N420 PRO

STREET PRICE £95 inc VAT
TELEPHONE N/A

MANUFACTURER MicroStar International
WEBSITE www.msi.com.tw

The Asus A7V266-E just gets edged off its well-deserved plinth by a motherboard featuring the NVIDIA nForce 4200 chipset. In testing, the board showed superb performance in the crucial OpenGL and DirectX 8.1 tests. It has a number of optional extras, so check with the retailer about what to expect in the box you buy – integrated LAN, additional USB slots, TV out and digital audio out are all available. Bear in mind that if you have an old video card, you may not need a new one with this board – it has a GeForce 2 MX class GPU integrated into the Northbridge... for free! Bit of a bonus...

PROCESSOR



AMD ATHLON XP 1900+

STREET PRICE £136 inc VAT
TELEPHONE N/A

MANUFACTURER AMD
WEBSITE www.amd.com

The Athlon XP processors are named after the clockspeed of Intel processors it claims to beat. The 1900+ actually runs at a clockspeed of 1.6GHz, and with new so-called QuantiSpeed architecture, more on-chip cache and souped-up 3DNow! instruction set, it offers superb performance in a range of applications – not least games. While the 2100 is currently the fastest processor in the range, the 1900+ is good value for money. Ensure your Socket A motherboard has an updated BIOS and correctly rated components to run an XP processor before you fork out.

HARD DRIVE



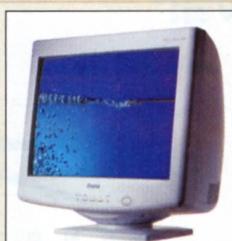
SEAGATE BARRACUDA ATA IV 60GB

STREET PRICE £78 inc VAT
TELEPHONE 01628 890 366

MANUFACTURER Seagate
WEBSITE www.seagate.com

We have a new Best Buy hard drive – the 60Gb Seagate Barracuda ATA IV. The IBM Deskstar 75GXP drives are looking a bit long in the tooth alongside this modern beastie. Although it's a 7,200 RPM drive, it runs both cooler and quieter than its peers, which can only be a good thing. Fully loaded with a 2Mb cache, the performance is solid across the board, both in terms of average seek times and sustained data throughput. We recommend the 60Gb drive on the basis that it seems pretty good value for money, though the range also offers 20, 40 and 80Gb variants.

MONITOR



IYAMA VM PRO 510 22IN

STREET PRICE £540 in VAT
TELEPHONE 01438 745482

MANUFACTURER Iiyama
WEBSITE www.iiyama.co.uk

Our long-standing Best Buy monitor, the VM Pro 510, is superseded by the 512. Equipped with the latest Mitsubishi aperture grille Diamondtron screen, it has a rather smaller viewable area than suggested, closer to 20 inches than 22, but gives outstanding results at resolutions up to 2048 x 1536 at 85Hz – something many graphics cards can't even support. If your video card has the bandwidth, you can rely on this monitor to give you pin-sharp results at 1600 x 1200. There's also the useful inclusion of a four-port USB hub as well as a pair of speakers – even if they do sound a bit tinny.

GRAPHICS CARD



PNY VERTO TI4200

STREET PRICE £129.99 inc VAT
TELEPHONE 01784 224 200

MANUFACTURER PNY
WEBSITE www.pny-europe.com

The Verto Ti4200 64Mb GeForce4 from PNY is a relatively late arrival, coming within 20 per cent of Ti4600 in many of our gaming benchmarks, yet costing almost half its price. Given that, it takes the Best Buy even though it's not the fastest card. The GPU offers all the core GeForce4 features including LMA-II, Accuview AA and nView, minus the £200-£300 dent in your wallet. Comparatively, offerings such as the Radeon 9000 are almost a step back from its predecessor, the 8500. NVIDIA have managed to keep their full top-end feature set in this chip and PNY's incarnation represents a great upgrade to any system not fortunate enough to already have one.

► BEST BUDGET ►

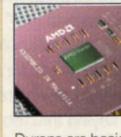


GIGABYTE GA-7VTXH

STREET PRICE £75 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Gigabyte
TELEPHONE 01908 362700
WEBSITE www.gbt-tech.co.uk

Upstages another great Gigabyte board – this one is a great Via KT266A-based DDR solution. Integrated are both 10/100 LAN and four-channel audio from Creative. In testing it proved stable and among the faster DDR boards for Athlon. A complete bargain.

NOW £75
WAS £76



DURON 1.3 GHz

STREET PRICE £57
MANUFACTURER AMD
TELEPHONE N/A
WEBSITE www.amd.com

Durons are basically Athlons with smaller Level 2 (L2) processor caches. This still compares favourably with Intel's ageing Celeron chip cache structure. Besides, Duron still has the blistering Floating Point Unit (FPU) mathematical calculation speed, making it a top processor for gamers.



SEAGATE U SERIES 6 40GB

STREET PRICE £62 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Seagate
TELEPHONE 01628 890366
WEBSITE www.seagate.com

The U Series 5 drives are now pretty much unavailable, but is replaced in the Buyer's Guide by its own replacement. The U Series 6 drive has much the same spec as the Series 5, but runs quieter and cooler. We've also uprated capacity to 40Gb – great value.



HANSOL 710P 17IN

STREET PRICE £135 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Hansol
TELEPHONE 01252 360400
WEBSITE www.hansol-uk.com

For the budget-conscious gamer, Hansol is a company well worth a look. With a fabulously low price, it will handle 1024 x 768 with a vertical refresh rate of 85Hz, and 1600 x 1200 at a creditable 75Hz. There's not a lot out there that'll touch this for the money.



VIDELOGIC VIVID!XS 32MB

STREET PRICE £49 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER VideoLogic
TELEPHONE 01923 277488
WEBSITE www.videologic.com

The new Kyro II chipset blows its slower Kyro brethren to smithereens at 175MHz clockspeed. The 32Mb Vivid!XS replaces the Hercules 3D Prophet 4500 as PC ZONE's Best Budget Buy – but only just, there is barely anything to choose between the two.

crucial
TECHNOLOGY
A Division of Micron

94,000 Upgrades for 15,000 systems

◀ BEST BUDGET



HERCULES GAMESURROUND FORTISSIMO II DE

STREET PRICE £45 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Hercules
TELEPHONE 020 8686 5600
WEBSITE www.hercules-uk.com

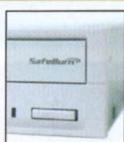
Hercules has just updated its fantastic Gamesurround Fortissimo II card to incorporate support for 5:1 sound, which merely cements its position as best budget buy. All other features stay the same.



MICROSOFT GAMEVOICE USB

STREET PRICE £34 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Microsoft
TELEPHONE 0870 601 0100
WEBSITE www.microsoft.com/sidewinder/

So how can a set of budget headphones cost almost as much as our Best Buy? Simple – the GameVoice enables you to talk to your mates over the Internet. It works very well, and as they double as a more than decent set of headphones, they're a bit of a bargain.



YAMAHA CRW3200E-VK

STREET PRICE £88
MANUFACTURER Yamaha
TELEPHONE N/A
WEBSITE www.yamaha-it.de

Yamaha has been making great CD-RW drives, and the 3200 is the company's current range-topper. We love its AudioMaster burning mode for high-quality audio CD burning. You will too. A veritable bargain.



SAITEK CYBORG 3D GOLD

STREET PRICE £30
MANUFACTURER Saitek
TELEPHONE 01454 451900
WEBSITE www.saitek.com

Saitek's current generation of sticks are fabulous. The Cyborg Gold is a top-line USB stick that excels across the board. The design is superb, both strong and adjustable – even the left-handed are catered for – and its response and accuracy can only be described as unequalled.



SIDEWINDER PLUG 'N' PLAY

STREET PRICE £19.99
MANUFACTURER Microsoft
TELEPHONE 0870 601 0100
WEBSITE www.microsoft.com/sidewinder/

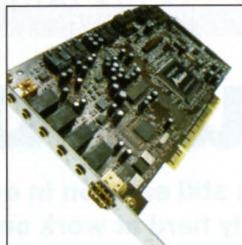
Four buttons, two triggers, directional pad, USB. Dead simple, dead effective and really rather cheap. The Plug 'n' Play Gamepad is the new basic controller from the Seattle Sidewinders and comes in funky transparent plastic, in contrast to the gloomy black pads of yesteryear.



HERCULES XPS210

STREET PRICE £40 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Hercules
TELEPHONE 020 8665 1881
WEBSITE www.hercules-uk.com

This small but perfectly formed 2.1 speaker set is cheap – but doesn't sound it. With tone controls and stereo enhancement, it's an ideal solution for desktop gaming. The satellites and subwoofer are well matched, giving a decent overall sound. And adorned in royal blue, it looks the part too...



CREATIVE LABS SOUND BLASTER AUDIGY PLAYER

STREET PRICE £79 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Creative Labs
WEBSITE www.europe.creative.com

The SonicFury gets pipped to the post by the excellent new Audigy Player from Creative Labs. Successor to the very successful Sound Blaster Live! series, the Audigy has an audio engine four times as powerful, excellent audio quality, and a range of features that makes it the most versatile all-round gaming/music/DVD soundcard. EAX Advanced HD adds a range of new 3D audio features, though it'll be a while before games filter through with support for the more esoteric options. It's about £20 more expensive than its main competition, but we reckon it's well worth it.

SOUNDCARDS

BEST BUY

HEADPHONES

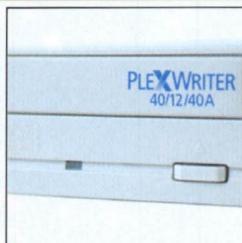


SENNHEISER HD 200 MASTER

STREET PRICE £45
MANUFACTURER Sennheiser
WEBSITE www.sennheiser.co.uk

This German audio company has been around for more than 50 years, and was founded by the suitably Teutonic-sounding Dr Fritz Sennheiser. The HD 200s are actually targeted at DJs, and for very good reason. They're very, very loud and they're also very, very strong. They feature a closed back design, which means you can hear nearby rocket jumpers quite comfortably. And, crucially for those extended gaming sessions, they're comfortable and light, weighing in at around 140g. A great pair of cans at a top price – well, what are you waiting for?

CD-RW DRIVES



PLEXTOR PX-W4012TA

STREET PRICE £89
MANUFACTURER Plextor
WEBSITE www.plextor.com

Plextor once again take top honours with a superfast 40x Write, 12x ReWrite and 40x Read drive. No matter what task you throw at it, it simply zips along, and BURN-Proof technology stops buffer underruns (where the data flow from the burner's cache to the burner is interrupted) from rendering the drive a coffee placemat machine. Particularly nifty is its PoweRec II technology which analyses the quality of the blank media being used and adjusts the write speed downwards if necessary. All in all, we reckon this is the best drive out there – and it's shipped with Nero 5, another major bonus.

JOYSTICKS



HOTAS COUGAR

STREET PRICE £249 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Thrustmaster
WEBSITE www.thrustmaster.co.uk

Have we finally snapped? Have almost ten years of producing the finest magazine known to man finally taken its toll? £249.99 for a joystick? Ah, but the HOTAS is probably the finest flight stick in the world, with a manual that must have taken a year to research and quality materials throughout, including the independent throttle stick. For those who have everything, this is the closest you'll get to sitting in a plane... if you're strong enough to lift it out of the box. Everyone else should avert their eyes and buy the Saitek Cyborg Gold instead. Or a diamond necklace or some other really expensive thing.

GAMEPADS



WINGMAN CORDLESS

STREET PRICE £40
MANUFACTURER Logitech
WEBSITE www.logitech.com

The PC might not have a single killer gamepad in its locker (for Christ's sake, why doesn't somebody just copy the PS2 design?) but this is the closest yet. The infra-red interface doesn't seem to hinder your input, and the discreet receiver unit won't clutter your desk unnecessarily. Plus the six-metre range doesn't suffer from any noticeable response deterioration the further you roam. Setting everything up is easy as pie, even if a lack of real documentation means the pad's functions aren't explained in any great detail. Comfortable to use, plenty of buttons and a complete lack of cables make this the best buy, but only by a short distance.

SPEAKERS



KLIPSCH PROMEDIA 4.1

STREET PRICE £299
MANUFACTURER Klipsch
WEBSITE www.klipsch.com

Take your pick for Best Buy between the stunning Klipsch 4.1 THX-approved speakers and the cheaper long-term favourites Sirocco Crossfire from Videologic. Both represent great value for money, but the Klipsch edges it in the listenability stakes, hence their new entry here. They're beautifully made, sound amazing and are the first speakers that can split your ears just as well as the Crossfires. You'll find no better speaker set-up for watching DVDs and playing games on PC. Your neighbours might not love them but we guarantee that you will... unless you're tone deaf.



EXTENDED PLAY

Finishing a game is only the beginning in Extended Play. Maps, mods, add-ons and extras are all here to help you get the most out of what you play

HAIR LOSS



■ IN MOURNING Rhianna Pratchett

▲ We've had a red letter day in the PC ZONE office. Martin Korda, our beloved reviews editor, has finally cut his hair. No small cut and blow-dry for Martin but a full grade six cut that makes him look like a cross between a bouncer and a dark-haired Tintin. But as Samson lost his strength when his hair was cut, so the mighty Korda-pounder may lose his. Prepare to see him turn into a shadow of his former self and the reviews section crumble until it's entirely populated by third-generation tycoon games, movie tie-ins and interactive 'Big Brother Series 15'. Or perhaps I'm just bitter because I was the only person who wanted him to keep the lengthy locks.

In this month's Extended Play we've some real gems. Check out Sid Meier on page 150, talking about *Civilization* in Games That Changed the World. PC ZONE is also proud to bring you the first part of a guide to the art of making games, written by industry veteran and Maxis developer, Jake Simpson. Jake's one of the people you have to thank for such classics as *Hexen*, *Soldier Of Fortune* and er... *The Sims: Vacation*.

We could be heroes

ON THE CD DVD **World Of Warcraft** is still early on in development but the *WC III* community is already hard at work on their own custom RPG adventures ■ www.blizzard.com/war3/ ■ www.warcraft3files.com



If in doubt, try your hand at controlling the forces of the undead. They're the easiest of the new armies to get grips with.



Charge your steeds yonder, my elfin minions. Forward into the fray.

WARCRAFT III was first unveiled at ECTS 1999, and at the time we were dubious about Blizzard's plans to add a heavy RPG influence to its reputable series. For the last three years, there's been a lot of speculation about

whether it could work, but now that the finished game has been released it's apparent that most of the planned RPG extras have in fact been removed. The result is a more traditional RTS, in line with the rest of the series.

With Bill Roper sounding off about the potential to build the entire *Warcraft II* campaign in just two weeks using the new *Warcraft III* toolset, it was inevitable that if Blizzard wasn't going to divert more from their RTS roots, the mod community were. And so, fresh from the breeding ground of game modification that is the Internet, come four new campaigns using many of the originally planned RPG features included in the *Warcraft III* editor.

To get you started, there's a multipart campaign in the form of *The Replacement Heroes* parts 1 and 2. Each is set two years before the *Warcraft III* campaign, and you can choose one of eight heroes to take on your quest with up to seven other companions. *Hell Fire*, sees you guiding Prince Arthas to the King's palace for example. There's a second episode due shortly, so don't forget to check the above link to download that. Finally, for those of you that demand a



The motley crew you command in the Fallen campaign are a little odd.

good three hours' gameplay out of custom *WC III* maps, there's *The Fallen* campaign, with a solid plot and a few cunning surprises.

Of course, we couldn't feature all these add-ons without including the latest *Warcraft III* patch v1.1.b. And for all you Blizzard fans out there, *Warcraft III* is the first title to feature in our desktop wallpaper packs, which you can also find on the DVD. Just when you thought *Warcraft* couldn't get any more beardy...



CHEATS AHOY!

ON THE CD DVD The old Cheat Master section of these pages may be dead, but we haven't buried it completely. Check out our cover discs where the art of cheating is still very much alive and kicking. You can find all the latest cheats for your favourite games under CheatStation in the Extended Play section of the discs.

This month we've got everything you need to know to cheat your way through *Grand Theft Auto III*, *The Sum Of All Fears*, *Starcraft: Brood Wars*, *Gangsters 2*, *Tropico*, *Max Payne* and *Ghost Recon: Desert Siege*. And in case you're in any doubt, just remember: those who can, do... those who can't, cheat. It's the only way.



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THE GUIDE
Get ahead in the games industry



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THE MODSQUAD
Parkas at the ready...



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DISC PAGES
Check out the latest demos



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FIGHT CLUB
Come and 'ave a go...

Twice the Force

Jedi Knight II goes down the co-op

■ <http://rebelops.oktagone.net/>

JEDI KNIGHT II might have turned out to be a solid game all-round, but one thing that could have potentially improved it would have been a co-op mode. It's a relatively popular addition to many of the upcoming FPSs of the next year and certainly something the mod community are constantly focusing on for many titles without co-op options.

Rebel Operations is a new mod planning to do just that for LucasArts' *Jedi Knight II*, while also bringing new maps and levels to the game based on props from the original movies. With planned settings including the Death Star and Echo Base from the movies, this mod is a *Star Wars* fan's dream and should be finished in the coming months. In the meantime, the team are still looking for contributors to finish off *Rebel Operations* as quickly as possible, so if you know your stuff, get over to their website.



It's still early days, but this could shape up to be a top mod.

Neverwinter Nights

■ <http://nwn.bioware.com>

ON THE DVD **IF YOU'VE STILL** got a 56K modem and don't relish the idea of a lengthy patch-downloading session for *Neverwinter Nights*, you can find the hefty manual patch on this month's DVD. You'll also find the official *Contest Of Champions* mod if you fancy testing out your characters in some player versus player action. Other stuff on the DVD includes more Bioware-created mods in the form of *Neverwinter Chess*, *War Wizards* and *Chicguins*. And as if that wasn't enough we've also included the best in *Neverwinter Nights* wallpaper and a selection of top class portraits from Crosbie at *Neverwinter Vaults*, one of which you might just recognise.



Try out our official Bioware NWN mods.

Freedom Force

■ <http://myfreedomforce.com/>

ON THE DVD **WHETHER** you're a Freedom Force devotee or as yet unbaptised into the First Church of Lycra, we've got a load of superhero goodies for you this month. First off is the 1.1v patch which allows you to indulge in a bit of skirmish play where you can test your heroes in customised scenarios and go up against either random or pre-generated bad guys. If you haven't tried the game but would like to have a go at creating your own heroes then you'll need the *Freedom Force* character tools off this month's discs. We've even bunged on three character meshes: the alpha male, the trench coat male and the ant soldier. For freedom people!



Patch them, skin them or make your own.

3d studio max 5

■ www.discreet.com

ON THE DVD **IF YOU'RE** into your modding, it may interest you to know that this month sees the retail release of 3d studio max 5, the industry-standard 3D-rendering package from Discreet. It boasts a huge list of new and improved features including cel-shading, vertex weighting, hardware shaders and Gmax compatibility using the Gmax pipeline for game modification.

At £2,695 it may prove a bit pricey for some of you, but you can get the scaled-down version of 3ds max on our disc. Gmax is the perfect tool to get you started on modelling and level design, enabling you to familiarise yourself with the 3ds max interface before forking out for the full product.



Test out 3ds max studio, before buying it.

SHORTS

THE KILLING GAME



ON THE DVD If NWN and Warcraft III wallpaper is a too bearded for your desktop, try our *Hitman 2* pack instead. To install the desktops, simply click on one you like from the right column, pick a resolution to match your desktop and click on the appropriate size. Then, simply right-click and choose 'set as desktop' from the menu in your Web browser.

GOOD MORROW



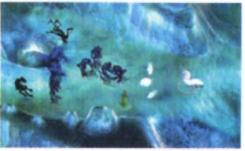
ON THE DVD To keep Morrowind addicts up to date, we've included the latest patch (v1.20722) for the European edition of the game. But if you don't want to lose your adamantine or leFemm armour when patching up, we've also added updates for those plug-ins plus the Master Index quest, which will allow them to work with the new patch.

ID'S GORGEOUS



ON THE DVD Carmack's back with a few *Doom III* shots this month and this time we get to see more of the monsters. While the cyber-demon's grotesque biomechanical features have yet to grace our pages, we did see the game running behind the scenes at Activision. Dave even glimpsed the creature in some gameplay footage.

BEARDED GREATNESS



ON THE DVD The latest update to *The Darkest Day* mod for *Baldur's Gate II* now comes with full support for the *Throne Of Bhaal*, bringing with it over 180 new items, 170 new spells and ten returning NPC characters from the original *Baldur's Gate*. Also packed into the 30 hours of extra gameplay this mod claims to provide no less than six entirely new full-scale quests.



THE GUIDE: HOW TO GET AHEAD IN THE GAMES INDUSTRY

PART ONE

How do you go about making a game? A misspent youth and an innate ability to dodge soap is a good start, but where do you go from there? Jake Simpson – 15-year industry veteran, now working for Maxis – is here to take you on a tour, from conception to shrink-wrapped packaging

SO YOU'VE got this great idea for a game and you're sure it's going to be the next big thing. You want it to be made into a blockbuster because you crave the fame, the fortune and the fabulously endowed

women/men. Oh yes, and it's the obvious way out of the dead-end job you've managed to get yourself trapped in since spending your entire childhood playing games rather than memorising your 13-times table.

The question is though, how do you do it? How do you turn your fledgling idea into a heavyweight shelf-contender – and avoid getting slated by people like us? In the next two issues of ZONE, we'll be taking you through the process of games development, including everything from that first glimmer in the eye all the way through to finished product. Starting here.

GET A JOB!

YOU'VE HAD ENOUGH OF SITTING IN YOUR UNDERPANTS PLAYING GAMES FOR FREE AND WANT TO GET A JOB? READ ON...



Could you make a game as good as *Medal Of Honor*?

This could be an entire article in itself. The bottom line here is perseverance. If you want to be in the games industry bad enough, you will get there. It's all about what you're prepared to give up to do so. You won't start out as a games designer, you won't be dictating what the game will be. You'll have to be prepared to start as a grunt, doing all the boring repetitive crap that others don't want to do. You might start as a tester, maybe a grunt texture artist, or a programmer doing the HUD graphics. But you will be in it. And there's only one way to go when you start at the bottom.

So how do you get that job? Well, prepare your CV and send it out. A lot. Do stuff to demo to people. Don't just say: "I can do this." Show that you can by actually doing it and remember that words are cheap. Keep current on the latest trends and topics. If you do actually get an interview, then you need to be able to impress with your command of the scene. Do research into what it is you actually want to do, so you can dazzle interviewers with your deep knowledge base.

Play games. Lots of them. Know what makes a game fun and what doesn't. Being able to constructively criticise a game in an interview is very impressive. When I hire someone, I want a games player, not a nine-to-fiver. Experience is always helpful, and some accredited qualifications are also a good thing, particularly if you are a programmer. Too many of the coders in the industry today aren't classically trained and therefore produce shoddy code. The industry has woken up to that now, and so they want people with Computer Science degrees – so bear that in mind. But bottom line, it's all about unflagging enthusiasm. Keep at it for long enough and you will get what you want.

THE DEVELOPING HOUSE

The days of coding a game in your bedroom are long gone. You can still make something half-decent for you and your mates to play around with, and you can definitely modify an existing game or create new levels using the toolkits provided, but if you want to make a triple-A platinum-selling game then you're not going to be able to do it on your own. You're going to need to team up and take your place in a development house, of which there are several types, namely, independents, in-house, satellite studios and contractors. Each of these work differently and play to very different tunes...

INDEPENDENCE DAY

Independents are companies that are self-owned. They might



This Californian office block houses fabulous secrets. Yes, it's the home of Jacuzzi hot tubs. Oh, and Maxis too.

make a game for one publisher one year, and then a completely different one the year after that. Think of them as the free spirits of the gaming world. Quite often they'll have more than one team working and while one team's working on a project for

Activision, another could be beavering away on a Microsoft title. The lucky ones are the independents who strike gold with a massive hit, leaving them open to fund the development of a particular game themselves (we're talking the top players



3D Realms doing the grunt work and shipping out copies of *Max Payne*.

here, such as id, 3D Realms, Valve and so on). This means they can wait until a game is almost finished before approaching a publisher. Most independents though live from cheque to cheque and are dependent on the publisher paying out advances and funding 'milestones'. The result of this is that the publisher has much more influence over the finished game, and in certain extreme circumstances can actually end up owning the game itself if critical deadlines aren't hit.

JUST ANOTHER DAY AT THE OFFICE

In-house teams develop the game and publish them as well. Microsoft has lots of in-house developers, as does Electronic Arts. In this case you work directly for the publisher at their offices, which means that it's a lot harder to sneak off to the pub and spend their money without them finding out about it. Unless you're working on *Pub Tycoon* of course.

The satellites are similar to in-house studios in that they're owned 100 per cent by the publisher, but they retain their individual identity – usually because of a strong presence in the market. Examples of this would be companies like Raven (Activision), Maxis (Electronic Arts) and Ensemble (Microsoft).

There's a sort of halfway house with some studios, which are half independent and half owned. In these cases the publisher has a financial interest

in the studio (usually in order to ensure the development house supports a particular game genre or platform), but doesn't own them outright. Nintendo owns a large slice of Rare, but doesn't own it completely. Quite often though it's only a matter of time before the owning publisher swallows up the remaining company completely.

HITMAN

Contractors operate on a freelance basis. Usually individuals (although you can find teams for hire), they have a strong record of producing good games and are hired in for a specific project and then set free once it's done. In reality however, this doesn't tend to happen too much in the gaming industry. The reason for this is that you need to have a seriously good CV before publishers or development houses will take you seriously enough to trust you with their money.

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

When you've got your team in place, or you've been lucky enough to be hired by a development house (see How To Get A Job box), the hard work begins.

Now it might sound obvious but you're not going to have a game without an idea. Think of it as an acorn that will grow into a... (OK, we get the picture – Ed). You'll probably throw loads of ideas around before one sticks, but as soon as you've



Another building with a secret. Within it, Raven soars, screeches, pecks people's eyes out and creates great games like *Soldier Of Fortune* and *Jedi Knight II*.

got one that you think has a chance you have to prepare a design document. Opinion in the gaming industry is divided on how deep this should be, with some advocating a complete and involved design document detailing everything that can and does happen in the game, right down to texture sizes. The more relaxed prefer to outline the basics without too much detail, leaving the game room to grow and develop without being stifled.

SCREEN TIME

After this, it's prototype time, where you actually get something up on screen. If you're making a first-person shooter you would concentrate on getting a single level designed, with one bad guy wandering about with one weapon. This is the point where you start spending real cash, which means that if you're not already tied in with the money men then you need to prove your worth to a publisher or 'he/she who controls the purse strings'. This stage in the development of a game can take from a couple of months to years if you have the money to eke it out.

When you create your

prototype you're going to settle on the tools you're going to use to build the game, whether you're going to use 3dsmax or Maya, and whether you'll create your own level-building tool or try and modify an existing off-the-shelf one.

BUILDING BLOCKS

If all goes well and you don't manage to create a level that's so pitiful the publishers almost sign you a blank cheque out of sympathy, you can start building the game. Everything that's happened so far is just the prelude, now you can start building levels, creating AI, creating all the weapon effects,

building your textures, models and so on. It's pretty exciting seeing all the stuff go in but it's also the time that you'll discover that some of the things you want to do just won't work. Or that you won't hit deadlines and the budget unless you cut some of the more ambitious features. Unfortunately, this happens more often than you can imagine, although if you're lucky you can just cut and paste the excess into an expansion pack or the inevitable sequel.

ALPHA

So now your game is built. You can play it from start to finish. Or at least, that's the idea. Because

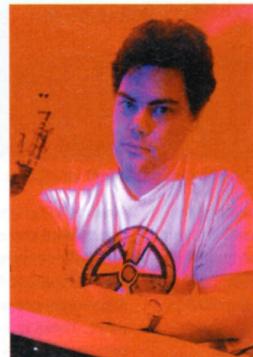
GOING SOLO

BEING INDEPENDENT ISN'T JUST ABOUT BEING YOUR OWN BOSS, SAYS GEORGE BROUSSARD

You might think that it's better to be an independent than to suck corporate gristle, but it's not always that clear-cut.

"The rough part about being independent is that you have concerns about money, payroll, rent and all the other headaches of running a business," says George Broussard (of 3D Realms and *Duke Nukem Forever* infamy). "It's incredibly infuriating to deal with publishers, because they care more about stock prices and shipping a game in a certain quarter, than doing what's best for your game, or giving you that critical two months of polish time at the end of your game. You also live cheque to cheque as the publisher dangles barely enough money in front of you to pay last month's bills, while also demanding quicker progress."

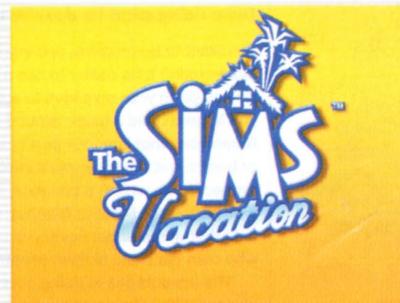
"On the bright side, you control your own destiny. If you make good games the balance of power and money can shift in your direction. You can control publishers more than they control you, and you can start to work on your own games instead of some licensed property, or just doing a project to make rent."



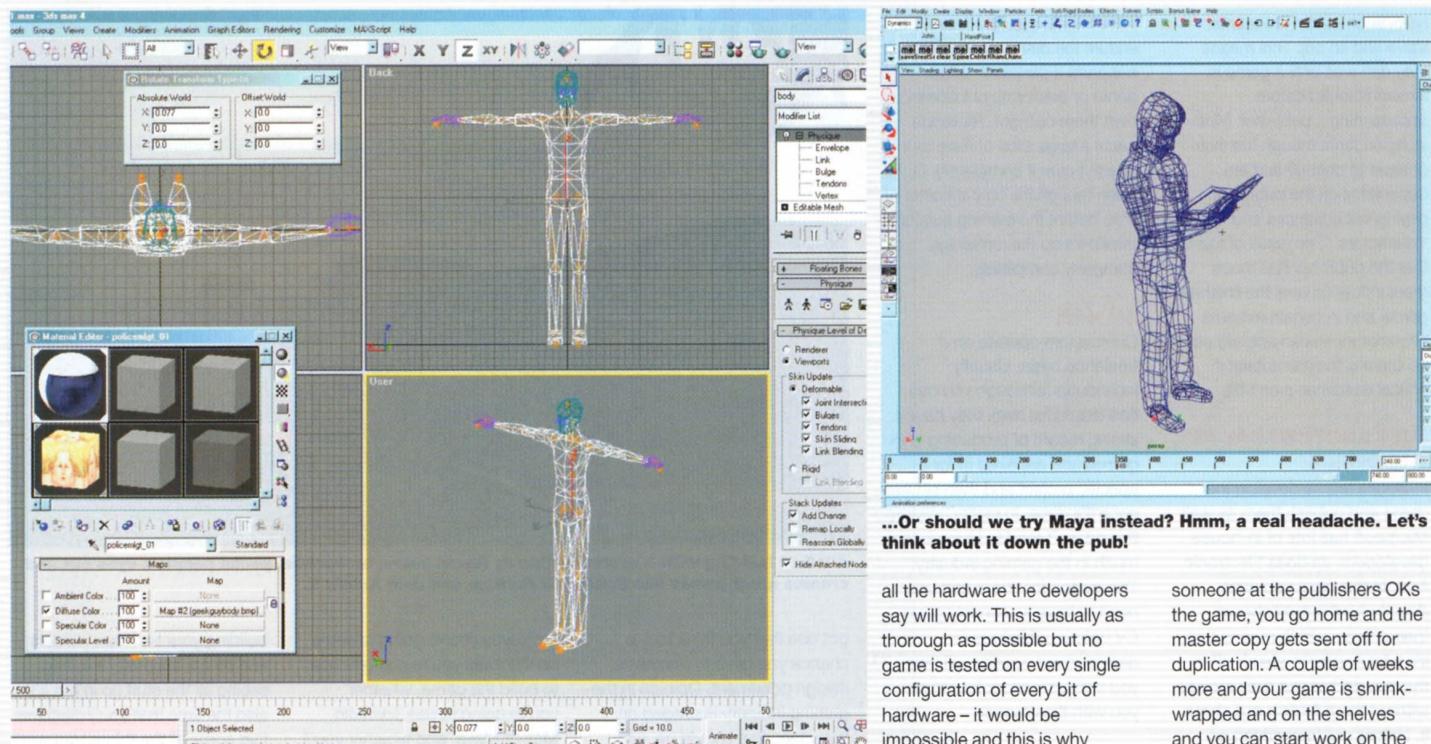
THE MONEY MEN

BUT HOW DO PUBLISHERS DECIDE WHAT THEY WANT TO PUBLISH?

Publishers get lots of ideas for games every day and generally they're only interested in talking to established teams with a history of delivering good games. When you approach them with an idea, the first thing they are going to want to know about is your credentials. Then they're going to want to hear the idea, to see a) if it's been done before, b) if it fits in with what they do (Disney isn't going to publish a *Mortal Kombat* clone) and c) if they already have a game of this type in development. Assuming you pass all this, then they'll do some market research, then check development costs and potential profit they might make before telling you to leave.



Localisation is an important part of the development process and revolves around adapting games such as *The Sims: Vacation* for marketing in other countries.



Decisions, decisions. Should we use 3ds Max for our models or...

the reality is that it's bugged to f***, and some of the art is unfinished. This more or less functional stage is called Alpha. Basically the game is feature-complete, even if all the features aren't finished (or even working properly). Now is when you stop adding 'new' stuff to the game and just go back and finish up everything that is already there. The first thing you have to do is fix all the nasty bugs, which can run into tens of thousands. At this point the publisher will start to kick off a full-scale media war, hitting magazines, websites and anyone else who's prepared to listen.

BETA

When you think the game is done you say that it's gone Beta. Then you have to wait to see if it gets the green light from the

publisher who's responsible for sticking the game through rigorous testing procedures. The game gets played by a dedicated team of testers who are paid to dig around and find anything and everything that's wrong with the game.

Now you might think that being a games tester sounds like a ball, but it's not all fun and games. They might get to play all day, but it's on the same game, day in, day out, with no rest for meals, sleep or the bathroom. They test, test, test, eat, test, sleep and then test some more. And they have to send out bug reports and then wait for them to be fixed before testing the game some more.

It's a serious business as well. Bugs that get through the testing phase give you a bad reputation. Most publishers have

their own testing departments (called QA - Quality Assurance) with a room full of PCs with lots of different combinations of video cards, memory, soundcards and so on to ensure the game plays with

all the hardware the developers say will work. This is usually as thorough as possible but no game is tested on every single configuration of every bit of hardware - it would be impossible and this is why 'bugs' can slip through in a game, which was signed off as complete.

The testing procedure can go on for a while. Meanwhile you don't get any sleep, your temper's pretty frayed and you drink too much coffee. Eventually, at some point,

someone at the publishers OKs the game, you go home and the master copy gets sent off for duplication. A couple of weeks more and your game is shrink-wrapped and on the shelves and you can start work on the inevitable patch. But that's another story.

NEXT MONTH: What do you want to be? Programmer, artist producer or games tester? We show you how to get the job you want.

ORIGINAL SIN

LICENCES VERSUS ORIGINAL IDEAS



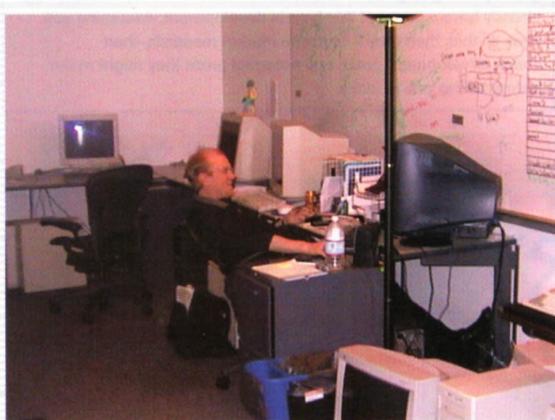
Duke doing what he does best - shooting green stuff at aliens.

You want to be creative, you want to be original, but wouldn't it be easier to use a licence? Do you try and pitch your own idea to a publisher or do you try and build a game around a licence? Remember that licences don't just mean movies or books, but other people's intellectual properties as well. For instance, SunStorm who built *Duke Nukem: Manhattan Project* built that game under licence from 3D Realms who own the *Duke Nukem* property.

The advantages of doing your own thing are obvious. When you own a property, you get to decide exactly what you do with it, and you

answer to no one. Also, if you own it and it's successful you can license it out to others, as in the earlier example, or Midway licensing out *Mortal Kombat* for a movie. It's money for old rope - you get paid and you don't have to do any work. There is a hitch. Convincing a publisher to take a risk on you is pretty hard and if they do think you're worth a punt they'll probably insist on owning the property if it's successful.

With a licenced property you get instant recognition, but at a cost. You aren't your own boss; someone else has to OK what you do - and believe me, licences aren't cheap.



Where the testers lurk. Note the large whiteboard and various PCs in a state of disrepair. This is because testers can break anything.

the *ii*[∞]mmaculate conception

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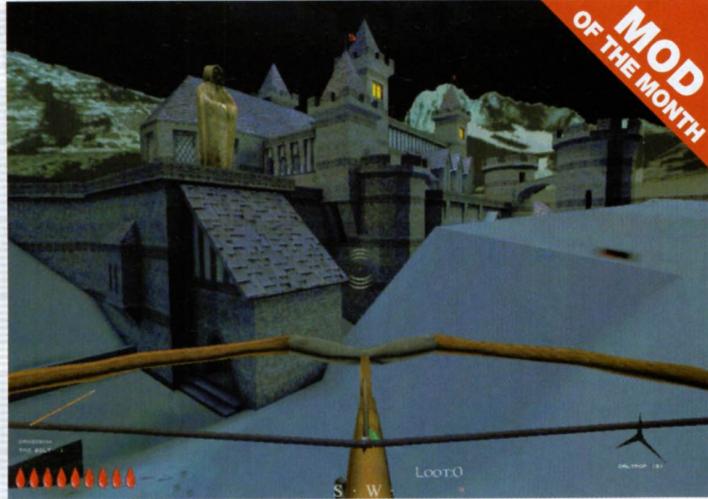
iiyama
quality | value | support

THE MODSQUAD

It's a mod, mod world for Tony Lamb



The atmosphere is dark and foreboding – perfect



Very Addams Family-esque, but luckily there's no Wednesday.

THIEVERY BETA 1.1

ON THE O DVD SIZE 124Mb + 11Mb REQUIRES Full version of Unreal Tournament, patched to version 436
www.ttlg.com/thievery

UNREAL Tournament is blessed with some of the best mods around, but most of these follow the relatively familiar shoot 'em up theme, so it's doubly pleasant when a quality add-on such as *Thievery* comes along. This mod is a homage to Looking Glass Studios superb *Thief* and *Thief II* games and the premise is that instead of making your way around fragging everything in sight, you have to obtain wealth (or more mundane

items) by stealing them, resorting to violence only when nothing else is going to work. Stealth is the byword here, not slaughter.

This change of emphasis away from gung-ho blood-letting made the *Thief* games something of a radical departure for most FPS fans, but due to its sheer originality the gameplay proved to

be a cult hit. Now *UT* owners can try out this secretive way of life all for themselves, in what has to be one of the best *UT* mods to date. *Thievery* is truly all-inclusive, with every aspect of *Unreal Tournament* swallowed whole, chewed-up and spat back out in a new format. Sure, the menu screen remains the same – this is 'only' a mod after all – but once you've chosen your map and gotten stuck in, it's a totally different experience

with all-new characters, objects, environments, mission tasks and an atmosphere all of its own. The feeling of personal danger so evident in *Thief* and *Thief II* has been captured perfectly, and you'll find yourself involuntarily holding your breath in an effort to move more quietly.

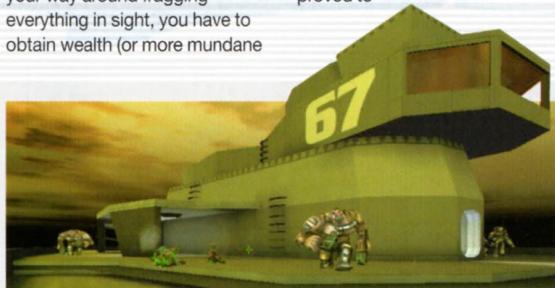
Of course, being inspired by another game means that *Thievery* doesn't really bring in anything that hasn't been done before somewhere else, but as

a mod it's damn close to perfect. It has the gameplay, the superb maps and the attention to detail to put it right up there with the best, and if you've never tried the *Thief* games, there's no excuse not to now. Install *Thievery* immediately and enjoy...

PCZONE
VERDICT

91

Simply brilliant



The Battleship map is one of the trickiest.



Use cover to your advantage in Defence Alliance.

DEFENCE ALLIANCE BETA 1.5

ON THE O DVD SIZE 66Mb REQUIRES Full version of Unreal Tournament, patched to version 436
www.planetunreal.com/da

DEFENCE Alliance brings a whole new element into *UT* – sheer panic. The idea is that you and your buddies are all on the same side, uniting your various skills to defend your ground against a common foe. You get to choose your class (and ergo standard weapons load-out) from a familiar selection of machine gunner, soldier, engineer, sniper, medic etc and then your team has a short while to organise itself before facing an attack by a force of bots. Lots of bots. A bowel-churning swarm of

heavily armed and suicidal server-controlled players whose only desire is to splash your vital organs around the four corners of the map. Nasty.

If you think *Defence Alliance* sounds like complete mayhem, then you're right – it is. The server will spawn a whole army of attackers and if your team fails to act coherently you're stuffed. This is a very enjoyable mod based around the *Assault* gameplay idea, with big, well-designed maps and classy weapon and character models

too – the sound effects are also good. *Defence Alliance* can be played standalone, but it's far better as multiplayer due to the teamwork requirements of the various classes. This is a shame – bot allies would be fun – but a team of endangered humans facing a determined enemy makes for plenty of excitement and action.

PCZONE
VERDICT

78

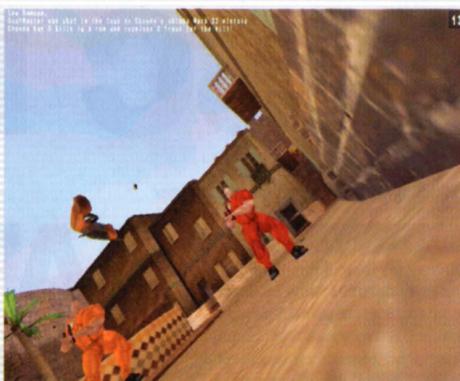
Heaven for Assault fans



Come get some – if you can.



Time to go and frag some money dealers.



Move too slowly and this is the last thing you'll see.

REACTION QUAKE III 2.1

ON THE DVD SIZE 148Mb + 55Mb REQUIRES Full version of Quake III Arena, patched to point release 1.31
www.reactionquake3.com

HAVING seen Action Half-Life, and enjoyed fond memories of Action Quake II, this mod was approached with some excitement, and sure enough many elements of those great add-ons can be found here, tweaked and optimised for the

Quake III environment. This is multiplayer Deathmatch at its best – fast, furious and bloody the way it should be. But hold on a moment because the team behind the mod are at great pains to point out that this is the "RE-action mod", inspired by

and containing some of the best elements of other "Action" games, but also a whole experience in its own right. They're right too, because Reaction Quake III is a very classy mod, packing in nearly 20 excellent maps, cool weapons

and addictive gameplay. Truth be told, a couple of the character models are a bit poor and don't do the rest of the mod justice, but you'll be moving so fast that it's only if one of them frags you that you'll notice. After seeing the game, fellow ZONE-person

Wandy suggested we have an after-hours LAN session. What a blinding idea.

PCZONE VERDICT

85

A real blast

KANONBALL LAN BUILD

ON THE DVD SIZE 35Mb REQUIRES Full version of Half-Life
www.planethalflife.com/kanonball



Kanonball's arenas are all damn impressive.

KANONBALL is a rarity among Half-Life mods. It's a ball game, relying on agility, fast reflexes and teamwork. There simply isn't a gun in sight. No blood, no shattered limbs, no frags. That's not to say it's peaceful – players barge and tackle each other with abandon to get their hands on the ball and maybe score a goal – but the lack of bloodshed makes it very different from most add-ons. It's

fast, frantic fun and it looks good too, with futuristic, athletic-looking character models and impressive gaming arenas. The animations as the players leap, duck, dive and roll sideways to avoid a tackle need work, but they still look convincing. Interestingly, when you perform one of these tricks the camera angle switches to third-person, allowing you to revel in your graceful dodging move.

Where Kanonball really falls down at the moment is its lack of an online game, but the team is working to resolve the bug that makes this a LAN-only affair. Let's just hope they succeed – Kanonball deserves it.

PCZONE VERDICT **71**
One to watch



He could definitely use a bit of a manicure.

PEARMAN

ON THE DVD SIZE 35Mb REQUIRES Full version of Unreal Tournament, patched to version 436
www.planetunreal.com/pearman

PEARMAN is without doubt one of the weirdest mods around, and God only knows where its inspiration came from. We all have strange dreams from time to time (Kelly Brook and five gallons of olive oil is a personal favourite of mine), but the hallucination that spawned this mod must have been a real stunner. Pearman is evocative of the brightly-coloured, cutesy-character-filled, wacky-gameplay efforts of the console market and wouldn't look at all out of place on any machine that Sony or Nintendo churn out. But don't let that put you off because as a LAN game it's not bad at all.

So far, it's limited to three spaced-out but fun deathmatch maps, although there is a single-player version on the way. The premise for which is so strange that to give it away would spoil the fun, but it could be released by the time you read this, so check out the website. Sadly, the maps are as yet incomplete and although the designs are generally good, a couple need quite a lot more detail work.

PCZONE VERDICT **60**
Shows promise but needs finishing

DISC PAGES

DISCS Mark Eveleigh
WORDS Mark Eveleigh and Alex Pinar

HELP!

CD trouble? Don't worry – phone our helpline on **08701 711 482**. The line is open weekdays between 9.30am and 5pm, and Saturday from 10am to 2pm, or email pc.zone@interchange.co.uk

BEFORE YOU DIAL... If you are calling the helpline:

- If possible, have your PC operating and near the phone when you call.
- If this is not possible, note down all relevant information – ie system type, soundcard, RAM and so on – plus the nature of the fault.
- Have a pen and paper to hand, so you can jot down the relevant info.

MINIMUM SPECIFICATION

- You need at least a P266 with 32MB RAM to run the software on the discs. Please note that some games also require a 3D accelerator card.
- Use the browser and menu system to see which demos are 3D accelerator only.

DISCLAIMER

- This disc has been thoroughly tested at all stages of its production. However, it is always wise to use a virus checker on any software before running it.
- Dennis Publishing Limited cannot accept any responsibility for any loss, disruption or damage to your data or your computer system (including hardware) that may occur while using either the disc or programs and data on it.

BATTLEFIELD 1942 MULTIPLAYER

CD1/DVD Pub: Electronic Arts **Reviewed:** Issue 121 (78%)

For the second month running, Electronic Arts has garnished us with more action from *Battlefield 1942*. Last issue we brought you the single-player demo for a taste of what was to come. This issue we bring you *Battlefield 1942* how it should be played – online and over a LAN with up to 64 players entering the fray.

This new demo sees the introduction of sea and air units, from the torpedo bomber to the gigantic aircraft carrier. You can drive all the vehicles, you can destroy everything and what's more you can do it all in a thousand different ways.

Set on the Wake Island level, the demo pits the Japanese naval fleet against five American outposts on the island. The Japanese begin with one fighter bomber, one fighter, an aircraft carrier, a Destroyer and several Dai-Hatsu landing craft. This force is nowhere near as well supported as the Americans who have five established outposts, an airbase, tanks, half-tracks and jeeps at every turn. In spite of this though, the Japanese side can unite to produce a near-unstoppable force with a naval barrage



In the full game, you get to do this in a B-17.

supporting an infantry landing and air support clearing the route ahead – often ending up as the winning side overall.

The Americans have good defences however, ranging from coastal guns to anti-air flak placements and a well-stocked

airfield with two torpedo bombers that can sink the Japanese fleet in only a couple of shots – if the Japanese side don't employ anti-air weapons on board.

The planes are tough to get a grip with initially, but you will get used to the flight physics soon enough to be dogfighting as well as bombing the enemy in each attack. Of course, you'll also want to try out the Destroyer and aircraft carrier units which, while bulky, can get up a hell of a pace across the water but will run aground if they edge too close to the shore. This is not good if you park your Destroyer between two coastal guns as you'll be obliterated in no time. Thankfully however, the ships will re-spawn.

It's been eating up our lunchtimes in the ZONE office, so get it installed and get online – you won't regret it.



You can actually sink this.



The jeep is fast but there's no guns.



HMS PC ZONE.

WALKTHROUGH →

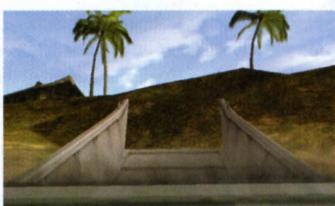
Just like Pearl Harbor only without the stale acting



1 If you've spawned on the Destroyer as a Japanese unit, head for the stern to hop in a Dai-Hatsu craft and get to shore.



2 Once you're in the craft, wait for your comrades to join you or start legging it for the beach – the Allies' planes are on their way to take you out.



3 When you get to the shore, fold down the front of the landing craft using the up arrow on your keyboard and ready yourself for the run to the first outpost. Watch for mines.



4 Run for the nearest vehicle or cover – whichever is closer. Once you've established your position, call in reinforcements using the function keys.



OPERATION FLASHPOINT: RESISTANCE

CD2/DVD Pub: Codemasters Reviewed: Issue 118 (83%)



They might have worked on improving the engine, but the soldiers still look like they're desperate for the loo.

Following on from the success of *Operation Flashpoint* last year, it was inevitable that an add-on pack would emerge. *Resistance*, set a few years before the events of the original, casts the player into the role of ex-Special Forces agent Victor Troska. His peaceful retirement has been shattered by the arrival of a Soviet invasion, and he's now a key figure in the Nogovan resistance movement.

Included in the demo are two full single-player missions in which Victor joins up with his resistance colleagues in

an attempt to hold back the Soviet force. A few small elements of the story from the new 20-mission campaign find their way into the demo, but for the full story you'll have to shell out the cash for the expansion pack. Within the context of the demo, the missions struggle to form much of a cohesive story.

Nevertheless, the chance to take on enemy positions with a variety of weapons as well as the opportunity to lead a squad into battle isn't one that should be missed, particularly if you're a fan of the original.

WALKTHROUGH →

Mission two: lead your grunts against the enemy forces



1 You've got your orders and time is short. Head off towards the outpost, marked by an arrow on your HUD and your troops will follow.



2 Head to the crest of the hill. From here pick off the enemy armoured patrol before the soldiers can reach the base.



3 With the patrol and any other immediate threats neutralised, head along the road into the outpost to eliminate any survivors.



4 That's the first part of your orders done. Consult your map to find the rendezvous point where you will meet up with the other team. Good luck soldier.

GLADIATORS

CD1/DVD Pub: Arxel Tribe



Call in aerial support if it's all getting a bit much for your guys on the ground.

Boasting a bright and colourful console aesthetic *Gladiators* pits a variety of warriors against each other in an arena-based battle to the death. However, this is not an FPS, but an 'action RTS' set in expansive coliseums that can contain mountains, valleys and forests.

In these huge arenas, you command a small squad to defeat the enemy. As if that's not demoralising enough, the first thing you'll see on this demo is the previous human squad being utterly mashed by arachnid foes with razor-sharp claws.



The enemies will charge all around you, making it harder to shoot back.

BANDITS: PHOENIX RISING

CD1/DVD Pub: GRIN

Set in a *Mad Max*-inspired universe, *Bandits* sits you in the gunner seat of a souped-up old banger. The vehicle is piloted by some mad Scottish creature who seems insistent on trying to destroy it – with you inside – right from the start when it drops you down a cliff.

So comes the latest driver/shooter from Swedish developer GRIN, and in these early stages it's already proving quite playable. With a huge landscape to cover in an objective-based stage from the game, this demo should provide hours of entertainment for action fans.

AMERICA'S ARMY: OPERATIONS

CD2/DVD Pub: US Army



Made and paid for by the US Army...



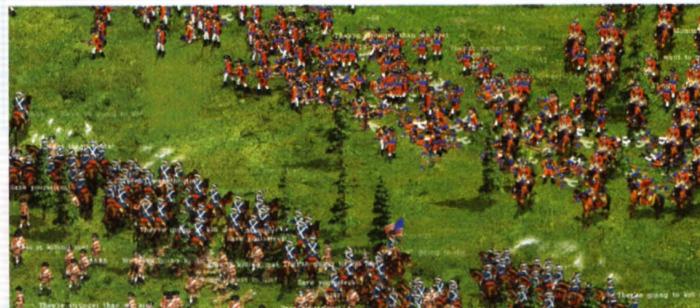
Remember kids: war is not a game.

The next two updates have now been released for this *Unreal*-powered recruitment tool, adding Sniper, Airborne and Ranger schools to the admittedly excellent online shooter.

You'll need the original file we put on last month's discs to play the updates, and if you want to know more about why it's causing a stir online then check out our review on page 94.

AMERICAN CONQUEST ROLLING DEMO

CD2/DVD Pub: CDV



If your troops are starting to tire and morale is low, send in the cavalry to help them out.

American Conquest, which utilises the power of the Cossacks engine, is almost here and this rolling demo shows just how great the visuals are already. With

thousands of units on screen at once, *American Conquest* promises war on an even greater scale than its predecessor, together with a whole new setting.

BALLERBURG

CD1/DVD Pub: HD Interactive



If the RTS is too much for you, just sit by a catapult and take out a castle.

Promising elements of RTS and action strategy rolled into one, *Ballerburg* lets you command an empire or man a catapult as you fight in a fantasy Middle

Ages. It's still early in development, but this demo should give you a taste of the various gameplay mechanisms together with a detailed tutorial to get you started.

CELTIC KINGS: RAGE OF WAR

CD2/DVD Pub: Wanadoo



Three on one? Good odds when you have the powers of a god.

Proving that there's still life in the isometric world of RPGs, *Celtic Kings* takes you on an adventure in Celtic times when men in skirts were feared. Following

the usual formula, your character is first blessed by a god before setting off on a quest to use his powers on the enemies of his people. Perfectly normal then.

DUKE NUKEM: MANHATTAN PROJECT

DVD Pub: Ubi Soft Reviewed: Issue 118 (52%)



It's not a bad laugh if you're in need of a quick blasting session.

Duke Nukem finally returns to the PC after years of anticipation for *Duke Nukem: Forever*. The only problem is that it's a 2D platformer and not a great one at that. However, all the classic Duke lines are in there, from "I hate pigs" to

"Come get some." It doesn't make up for the quality of the game, but it will have you reminiscing over the days of *Duke Nukem 3D*. Let's hope 3D Realms hurries up with *Duke Nukem Forever* and restores the Duke's good name.

PATCHES

- America's Army:
Operations 'Recon' v1.11
- Day Of Defeat 3.1
- Dungeon Siege v1.1

CD2

- The Elder Scrolls III:
Morrowind v1.2.0722
- Freedom Force v1.1
- Warcraft III: Reign Of Chaos v1.1b

MOVIES

- Republic
Neverwinter Nights TV Commercial

CD1

- Praetorians

MODS

- Day Of Defeat 3.1

CD2

- CELTIC KINGS: RAGE OF WAR

DEMOS	CD2
Moral Minus	GeneRally
EXTENDED PLAY CD2	
Warcraft III: Add-ons	Morrowind Official Plug-Ins
Neverwinter Nights Official Plug-In:	Mafia TV Commercial
Contest Of Champions	Freedom Force v1.1
Neverwinter Nights Portraits	Freedom Force Character Tools
The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind v1.2.0722	
MODWATCH CD2	
Kanonball 1.99L	Pearman

EXTENDED PLAY CD1	CD2
Neverwinter Nights Official Plug-Ins	
MOVIES CD2	
Command & Conquer: Generals	Unreal Tournament 2003
SimCity 4	Mafia TV Commercial
007: Nightfire	XIII
Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance	Hitman 2
PATCHES CD1	
America's Army: Operations v1.11 to 1.20	

DVD EXCLUSIVES

THE CONTENT ON THIS PAGE IS ONLY AVAILABLE ON THE DVD EDITION OF PC ZONE. TO SUBSCRIBE AND GET A PACKED DVD EVERY MONTH, TURN TO PAGE 138

One of the best reasons for upgrading to our DVD is the exclusive DVD-Video content we've got on the disc each month. Just stick the disc in your DVD player, pour yourself a cup of tea and you can watch tomorrow's biggest games on your TV today in full-screen Technicolor. This month we've got some superb footage from our cover game, *Command & Conquer: Generals*, along with a banging trailer for *007: Nightfire*.

DEMOS

Batman Vengeance

Trainz

Sven's World Challenge

Prince Of Qin

EXCLUSIVE DVD-VIDEO

Command & Conquer: Generals

SimCity 4

007: Nightfire

The Making Of The Lord Of The Rings Game

Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance

The Others Trailer

Black Hawk Down Trailer

PATCHES

The Darkest Day v1.03

Gore Patch and Upgrade Pack

Neverwinter Nights Manual Patch v1.22

SCREENSHOT PACKS

Doom III

Unreal II

Master Of Orion III

Colin McRae Rally 3

Mafia

Return To Castle Wolfenstein:
Enemy Territory
Star Trek: Elite Force II
TOCA Race Driver

MODS

Day of Defeat 3.1 Full Mod

MOD WATCH

Thievery Beta 1.0
Defence Alliance Beta 1.5
Reaction Quake III 2.0

MOVIES

Project Nomads
Colin McRae Rally 3
TOCA Race Driver
Kingdom Under Fire: The Crusaders
1914: The Great War
Stalingrad
White Fear

EXTENDED PLAY

Warcraft III: Wallpapers
Neverwinter Nights Manual Patch v1.22
Neverwinter Nights Wallpapers
Neverwinter Nights Portrait: Male Mage
Hitman 2 Wallpapers

ESSENTIAL PATCHES

Age of Empires II v2.0a
Aliens Vs. Predator 2 v1.0.9.6
Baldur's Gate II: Shadows
Of Amn v23037
Ballistics v1.0.1
Battle of Britain Patch 2
Black & White v1.20
Command & Conquer:
Red Alert 2 v1.006

Command & Conquer:
Renegade English Update
Championship Manager 01/02 v3.9.65
Civilization III v1.29f
Colin McRae Rally 2.0 v1.05
Commandos v1.2
Counter-Strike Mod v1.5
Counter-Strike Retail v1.0.0.5
Crimson Skies v1.02
Deus Ex v1.112fm
Diablo II v1.09d
Escape From Monkey Island
Giants v1.4
Grand Prix 3 v1.13
Grand Theft Auto III v1.1
Half-Life v1.1.0
Hidden & Dangerous v1.3
Hostile Waters v1.03
IL-2 Sturmovik v1.1a
Jane's F/A 18 v1.01f
Jane's USAF v1.02
Jedi Knight II: Jedi Outcast v1.04
Medal Of Honor: Allied Assault v1.11
Midtown Madness 2 v1.1
The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind v1.2.0722
Neverwinter Nights Manual Patch v1.22
Operation Flashpoint: Cold War Crisis v1.46
Project Eden v1.01
Quake III Arena Point Release 1.31
Return To Castle Wolfenstein v1.33
Settlers IV v2.04.1090
Soldier Of Fortune II: Double Helix
Soul Reaver 2 v1.02
The Sims v1.1

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3 v1.01
Virtua Tennis v1.1
Warrior Kings v1.2 to 1.3
Warcraft III: Reign Of Chaos v1.02

ESSENTIAL DRIVERS

Detonator XP 30.82 drivers
for NVIDIA cards
Videologic Vivid!XS card drivers

ESSENTIALS

3DMark2001 Second Edition
Adobe Acrobat Reader 5.0.5
(with search capability)
DirectX 8.1b for Windows 2000
DirectX 8.1b for Windows 98/
Millennium Edition
GetRight 4.5d
gmax
HyperSnap-DX 4.52.01
Internet Explorer 6
Trillian 0.725
WinZip 8.1
ZoneAlarm 3.1.0.1



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FIGHT CLUB

Membership is limited to those who like taking their aggression out on others.

Martin Korda invites you to join

THURSDAY August 15 2002.

Just after dinner. Well before that sneaky late-night snack. Yeah, you know the one, you greedy bloater. Where was I? Oh yeah, here. Two sides, one goal – total elimination of the enemy. Yes, August's Free-For-All produced yet another tense and bloody confrontation between the forces of good and evil as us ZONE boys played against you lot in a battle of wits,

reflexes, skill and pings. Due to popular demand, it was ZONE versus Readers for the majority of the evening, and from the debris and carnage came stumbling this month's Star Players. They were K.I.T., Tupperware, Spearchew, Cpl-Punishment, Pienaar and BP/MrCaffeine. Interestingly enough, no one from last month's list earned a second mention this month, meaning that we're still no closer

to finding our first readers worthy of entering the PC ZONE Hall of Fame. Remember, get mentioned five times on these pages and your name will become legendary within the PC ZONE community. So get practicing and get online. Immortality awaits. Well, until someone runs out of loo roll and turns to these pages as back-up. See you online next month.



PC ZONE GAME SERVERS POWERED BY JOLT.CO.UK

OUR SERVERS ARE OPEN 24/7 AND FREE OF CHARGE. WHY PLAY ANYWHERE ELSE?

We've switched our game servers to the ultra-fast Jolt service, which means lag should now be a thing of the past. We've also changed the way you find them, and from now on we'll refer to them by their name rather than by their address. The easiest way to connect is to load the game you wish to

Team Fortress Classic Public Server #1 – [24hr 2fort]: tfc.zonegames.co.uk:27025

TFC Public Server #2 – [24hr Badlands]: tfc.zonegames.co.uk:27035

Quake III: Threewave: q3.zonegames.co.uk:27970

Counter-Strike Public Server #1 [All maps]: cszonegames.co.uk:27015

Counter-Strike Public Server #2 – [3De_]: cszonegames.co.uk:27025

play, go to the multiplayer connection screen and instead of typing in an IP address, type in the name of the server from the list below. They can also be accessed from a server browser such as The All-Seeing Eye or GameSpy. Remember to use the password below, which is updated each month.

Counter-Strike Public Server #3 – [DualDust]: cszonegames.co.uk:27035

Counter-Strike Public Server #4 – [Classics]: cszonegames.co.uk:27045

Unreal Tournament Public Server: ut.zonegames.co.uk:7807

Wolfenstein Public Server: rtcw.zonegames.co.uk:27960

PASSWORD: candid

LAN ROVER SPECIAL: i-14

COME TO THE BIGGEST LAN EVENT IN THE UK AND SAVE YOURSELF £5

You've probably heard of Multiplayer's i-series of LAN parties – they're the largest in the UK – and after we travelled down to witness the carnage of i-12 and being suitably impressed we decided to get involved at i-14. It runs from 9am on the November 15 to 6pm on the November 17 (the actual gaming is 24/7 or for as long as you and your packets of Pro Plus can stand it), and it costs £60 for a participant ticket (flat fee) or £5 per day for spectators. Use our coupon on the right though and you can bag yourself £5 off the entry price and spend the money at the bar when you get down there. There are 600 initial spaces up for grabs but scope for more than 1,000 if the interest's there, so why not sign up now and take part in what could be the biggest event of its kind in the country ever.

We'll be down there as well, hosting an invitational tournament on a game of our choice, which you'll be free to take

part in. We'll probably be choosing an Unreal Tournament InstaGib match but seeing as we're going to be getting loads of practise in between now and then we'll probably change our minds after we realise we suck. Beat us and we'll be forced to hand over loads of prizes as well as begrudgingly buying you a drink. And, as well as the PC ZONE Invitational there are plenty of other tournaments to

join, some for fun and some (Counter-Strike, Quake 3, Warcraft 3 and Team Fortress Classic) with hard cash as prizes. See you there.

Just a quick mention as well for Steve Randall's, 'GG LAN 101' (October 26-27), with space for up to 101 people. Get your name on the list at www.GGLan.co.uk. First come, first served, as usual.

£5 OFF i-14 ENTRY

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Are you a current subscriber (please tick)

Make your cheque for £55 payable to Multiplay UK Ltd and send it to 9 Bernwood Grove, Blackfield, Southampton, Hampshire, SO45 12W to arrive no later than October 10. For more information log on to www.multiplay.co.uk

Terms and conditions: Only one coupon per person. Only redeemable against i-14. If you don't want to ruin your copy of PC Zone just photocopy the coupon and send it in.



Carnage at the recent i-12 event.

FREE-FOR-ALL

**THURSDAY
10 OCT**

6.30pm – 9.00pm

Counter-Strike server

KNOW YOUR ENEMY

Dave Woods	Kid Unknown
Richie Shoemaker	Zapatero
Martin Korda	Nameless One
Anthony Holden	Shokupan
Mark Hill	Leatherface
Paul Presley	I R Baboon
Lee Cocker	Viper
Phil Clark	Shit Kicker
Danny King-Smith	Ronin
Colin Mackleworth	M.A.C.H.I.N.E.

FREE-FOR-ALL CONNECTION DETAILS

Connecting to our Free-For-All Server is extremely simple. And to make things easier still, we have given the server a permanent home. To hook up from within the game, open the Half-Life console and type password `pczone` and then press enter. After this type `connect ffa.zonegames.co.uk` and press enter. You will be taken right there. You can also add the server to popular game browsers such as The All-Seeing Eye or GameSpy 3D by entering `ffa.zonegames.co.uk` where you would normally provide an IP address. If you experience any problems connecting on the night of the Free-For-All then check our forum at www.pczone.co.uk in case of any last-minute changes or information updates.



MAILBOX

Everybody needs a good rant every now and again, and we're here to listen...

■ HOLDING COURT Dave Woods



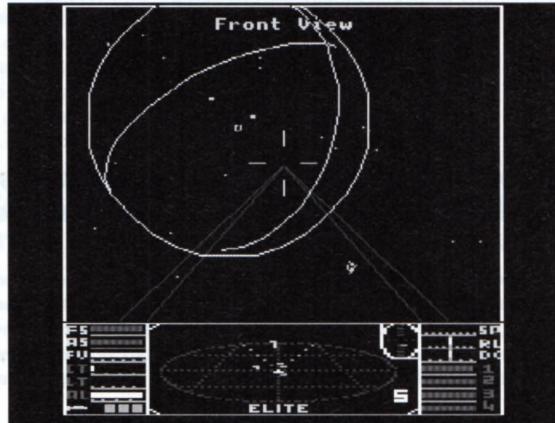
L33T

Just a quick mail to say thanks for your excellent nostalgic article on one of the best games ever created – the one and only *Elite*. Oh, how I spent many a happy hour playing as a young teenager; proudly gaining my *Elite* Fugitive status after obsessive all-night sessions, successfully guarding precious save games from prospective destroyers (Dad!) and threatening anyone who ventured near our good old 486 (without at least one week's notice) with a good old teenage tantrum.

After reading the article and dreaming of the days of bounty hunting and Galactic Hyperdrives, I immediately hit Ian Bell's website and downloaded the PC version. I have utilised my lovely 1.9 gig AMD with Ti4600 to this effect ever since.

Caroline Beesley

It's brilliant that Ian Bell has made *Elite* available for download. It genuinely is one of the games that changed the world as we know it, and it gives you all a chance to see why. If only all developers were as clued-up... Check out



Elite: a freely downloadable 3D wireframe spectacular.

www.iancbell.clara.net for more information.

BACK TO SCHOOL

After reading Adam Phillips' comment last month, I had to write in to agree. End-of-level bosses are a lazy and dull device used by developers who can't be bothered to think of a novel approach. I mean how hard can it be to come up with a design that encourages you to think your way through a problem or one that

throws a variety of enemies at you with a different fighting style and different levels of intelligence? And more importantly, how hard can it be to come up with a decent ending that rewards you for playing through a game for 20 or so hours?

When I was at school we were taught you should write a good beginning to a story (to get people hooked) and a good end (as it's the thing people are going to remember) and that you could pad the middle out with

end-of-level bosses (I made the last bit up). Why can't game developers do the same thing and if not, can you start giving out detentions?

Gareth Jones

Or how about 100 lines for every per cent score we knock off the review?

COUNTER-STRIKED NUMBER ONE

I have two things to say. First of all, I was wondering if you guys at PC ZONE think that *Counter-Strike: Condition Zero*, will take the majority of normal *Counter-Strike* players, leaving the original CS with a measly bunch of players and a few servers? (I don't think this will happen because CS is so popular but what do you think?) Secondly, I would like to say something in reply to Gavin Reith's letter. PC ZONE is a gamer's magazine and therefore gamers read it and gamers know what RPG and MMORPG stand for.

Rogan Ogden

COUNTER-STRIKED NUMBER TWO

OK, where's *Counter-Strike: Condition Zero*. I've been waiting for the game all year, you've been saying that it's about to get released and then everything goes silent. Is it still going to get released, or is it going to disappear into the same void of software as *Team Fortress 2*? I've been looking forward to it because of the gameplay, which is still as addictive as ever. I wasn't that bothered about the slightly dated look of the graphics, but if it drags its feet too much it's going to look pretty bad beside stuff like *Unreal 2* and *Doom 3*.

Andrew Lambirth

Fret thee not. We've talked to Gearbox about *Counter-Strike: Condition Zero* and the plan is to update the original CS files so that everyone can play the updated version online. The

GOT SOMETHING YOU NEED TO GET OFF YOUR CHEST? WRITE TO...

MAILBOX, PC ZONE, 30 CLEVELAND ST, LONDON W1T 4JD, OR EMAIL LETTERS@PCZONE.CO.UK

■ The Letter of the Month wins a spanking new graphics card courtesy of the lovely people at Creative Labs. The Blaster 4 Titanium 4400 is as good as the name suggests, and sporting the new GeForce 4 chipset, it gives you more bang than a rabbit stuffed with semtex.



When *Condition Zero* is finally released it will be compatible with the original CS.



READER REVIEWS

▲ FANCY A CAREER WRITING FOR A GAMES MAG? WELL PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT...

We want reviews of the games you love or the ones you hate. Each one should be between 50 and 350 words and come with a score out of 100. The best one wins a game from the current charts. Send your review to the standard Mailbox address (see boxout) and remember to include your name, address and telephone number.

MEDIEVAL: TOTAL WAR
PC ZONE ISSUE 120 – 90%

**We Said... "A must-buy?
Yes. The next chapter
of the RTS revolution?
Definitely not, but it's still
the ultimate strategy
experience."**



STAR
REVIEW

Medieval is very good, but it's not a classic. There are so many ways in which it could have improved upon the stunning visuals, artillery, numerous units and its ability to utterly engross you in the battle scenes. I would love to have seen a storyline that lived up to the beautiful gameplay and a game that wasn't so entirely mission-based. If only you could have interacted in the cut-scenes, because the engine was certainly up to it. When I read the reviews it seemed as though the game was promising more interactivity and realism. In reality, it feels very wooden when played, no matter how easily it reels you in.

It turns out that *Medieval* is yet another 'more of the same but slightly less glitched' sequel. You can just feel the disappointment welling up, especially after waiting months to see it. That said, it's still miles ahead of all the other games in its genre, (including *Shogun*), and at least it is (yet another) step in the right direction. Maybe 'Stone Age: Total War' will deliver.

Kevin Mackay
SCORE: 89%

way they see it, CS has always been free to play, and the release of *Condition Zero* isn't going to jeopardise that. And, while *Condition Zero* is obviously going to enhance the online side of the game, the big reason for buying it is for the superb single-player campaign. As to its release date, we're in the dark as much as anyone else I'm afraid. It will get released though and it won't be too much longer; the last build we saw looked pretty much finished.

PUSH ME

I hate getting stuck in games. You all know how it is. One moment you're racing through the corridors of some spaceship, biting the heads off marines and chasing scientists, and the next you're slamming your fist/head against the keyboard, searching the Net desperately for cheats. How was I supposed to know that I couldn't get through that ventilation shaft with the spinning fan? I was sure I could clear it if I timed it right.

It's annoying and the reason why *Half-Life* – and scripted games in general – always seem so much more atmospheric than open-ended ones. I'd rather walk down a single corridor than choose between two, get lost and repeat the same course several million times. Maybe it's because I don't trust myself to



It's game over in London, but Game On moves to Scotland on October 14.

make decisions. I replay set pieces from games like *Max Payne* and *GTA III* to perfection, because they make me feel warm inside. In *Max Payne*, you feel the end coming from the very beginning and it draws you on. The battle between realism and gameplay can end in compromise, but plot development versus freedom of choice has a multitude of subsets. And they all boil down to this: Does the average gamer have the capacity to be responsible with the freedom he is given and make intelligent choices, or does the ultimate cinematic moment have to be non-interactive?

Sky Ainsbury

I think one of the game's you mentioned has the answer. *GTA III* is both linear and

freeform in nature, giving you the best of both worlds.

JOCK ON

I'm really interested in going to the Game On exhibition but living in Scotland I can't afford to get down for the day. I've heard rumours that it's moving up to Scotland. Is this true, and if so when is it coming to the spiritual home of games?

Steve Wilson

Good news: Game On is moving to Scotland's Royal Museum on October 14 and will run until January 30 2003, so there's plenty of time to get yourself down there.

COPYCAT

Like most PC ZONE readers, I've been playing games since I was a wee nipper, and though I wouldn't say it's the first thing I flick to, I've always enjoyed the way you guys recognise the entire history of games through Retro Zone, your All-Time Classics and the occasional feature such as Lost And Found (issue 120). It's like me old man used to say, "You canna forget yer roots, boyo."

When you first introduced Emulation Zone last year I thought it was just another retro section, and to be honest I couldn't really see the point of having Retro Zone and Emu Zone in the same magazine. However, I recently visited some



Joust is one of the best multiplayer games ever. No really.

emulation websites and downloaded MAME and some other more obscure emulators. I quickly had half a dozen of my favourite old arcade games running in all their glory in the comfort of my bedroom. Some of them were laughably dated, but the classics were just as great as I remember them. *Defender* is still rock hard. *Street Fighter II* is still the most well-balanced fighting game ever. *Joust* is just plain genius.

I am now thoroughly hooked. Some of the games I've discovered are absolute gems, and not all emulators are stuck in the past – some emulate games from just a few years back.

I think people who dismiss retro gaming and emulation as mere nostalgia are missing the point. It's been said before, but no matter how 'retro' the graphics, classic gameplay will never fade. So thanks PC ZONE for opening my eyes to a new

world of gaming that is a) free, and b) an endless source of brilliant gameplay. Keep it up.

Jamie McNaughton

And remember kids, downloading ROMs is illegal unless you own the originals. But you're right, Joust is probably one of the best games ever made in the history of the world, ever.

SOCIAL SERVICE

I was rather curious when I read the star letter from Steve Lopez (Mailbox – issue 120). I was always told as a kid that I would only know if I liked or disliked

something if I tried it first, so how can Mr Lopez make a final judgement on the virtues of multiplayer gaming if he believes the online functions are just there to distract us from a substandard single-player product. I believe he is way off the mark.

I am a 'newbie' to coin a phrase. I have only had a PC for the past year but in that time I've gone online against loads of people – not always successfully. I admit that I'm not the best player in the world, but I'm always willing to give anything a try. Yes, there are cheats out there and there

always will be, but then there are also many fair-playing online gamers too. The whole point of online gaming is not winning, but enjoying yourself – something the cheats have yet to understand!

The online community is huge. I will probably never meet any of the people I have played with, but then that doesn't matter. I've no idea what colour these people are, or whether they're male or female but I don't care. Let's just play games and enjoy ourselves with fellow human beings.

Matt Davidson

STARS IN THEIR EYES



STAR LETTER

Apparently Steve O'Hagan used to sound like Aled Jones when he was young. What's more, they've never been seen in the same room.

Looking through the lastest issue of PC ZONE, it struck me that your mag is staffed by a bunch of celebrity impersonators. I was first alerted to this fact when in last issue on page 100 I noticed that Steve Spence, the guy writing your hardware stuff looked exactly like the Tim Henman strip-o-gram we hired for my mate's hen party a few months ago. My suspicion aroused, I turned to page 118 where I realised that writing your Extended Play section was Rhianna Pratchett, who can only be described as Nigella Lawson's leather-clad doppelgänger.

Getting more and more convinced that I was on to something, I flicked back to page 110 where there staring back at me was someone going by the name of Phil Wand, who can only be described as an unholy combination of Frank Skinner and John Gregory, manager of Derby County.

Further inspection revealed on page 96 the haggard, Keith Chegwin-like boat race of Paul Presley, the pinched mouth and balding pate of Chris Anderson, aka Billy Bragg, and on page 67 was to be found the homeless, middle-aged Aled Jones wannabe otherwise known as Steve 'The Window-Cleaner' O'Gaybum. There's a brilliant one for Martin 'Fabio' Korda as well, but I can't tell you as he looks pretty big and mean.

But all of this was nothing on what was to come. Because the most incredibly reminiscent bonce of all was none of the above. Oh no. Imagine my surprise and outright shock, when after discovering the Stars In Their Eyes-like conspiracy detailed above, I turned to page 132 where peering out of these very pages was yourself, Dave Woods with your trademark combination of Brad Pitt irresistability and Johnny Depp intensity. Can I have that graphics card now please? If not I could always switch you to an impoverished John Parrot.

Serena Trident

And no one would want that.

READER REVIEWS

▲ DELTA FORCE: TASK FORCE DAGGER PC ZONE ISSUE 120 – 44%

We said... "If this tops the charts they'll be boxing camel shit and putting it on the shelves next."



Each to their own I say. Some people love playing games full stop, some prefer single-player games and some prefer to pit their wits against real human beings. Consistent cheating online is a pain in the arse, but if you play against people you know then multiplayer gaming is brilliant.

BACK TO REALITY

What's happened to Reality Check? I mean I know that Steve Hill broke his collarbone pretending to be a member of a SWAT team, but can't you rope someone else in to carry on his good work? I thought it was hilarious and you need to keep stuff like that in the mag, not get rid of it. There must be more genres that you can cover.

Tim Spears

Reality Check hasn't disappeared, it's just taking a short sabbatical. We're currently in tense negotiations involving Korda, and a certain US wrestling camp, to celebrate the imminent arrival of WWE RAW to the PC. □

So it's 'an atrocious and near criminal stand-alone'? It 'screams cardboard shoddiness'? Did you play the same version of *Delta Force: Task Force Dagger* I did? OK, the graphics aren't the greatest, but *Doom III* ain't out yet, so it's not like there's much of an alternative.

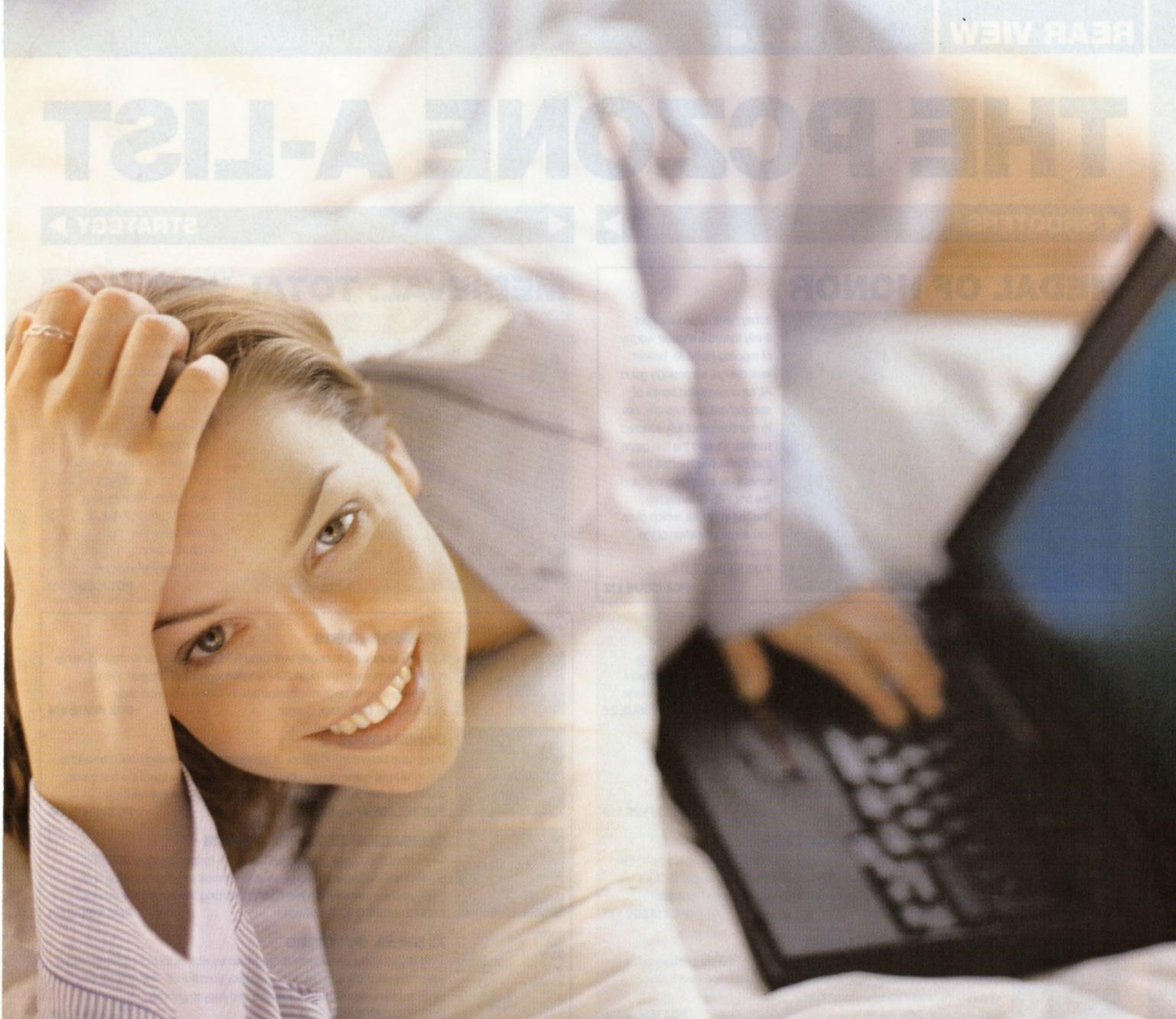
From what I can remember from seeing Afghanistan on the telly, most of the country is rather beige and featureless, so anything else is a bonus. Useless third-person view? I thought that was obligatory on games like this? How the hell are you supposed to aim a rifle if you can't even look through the sights?

As a game, *DF: TFD* has problems, the AI is poo, you get shot out of nowhere, but hey that's just like the real world. And yes, the subject matter is possibly a bit too recent, but it's an enjoyable romp. Oh, and if you can show me a squad-based shooter or FPS that doesn't have repetitive missions, I'll play a crap game of your choice to the end.

James Glen
SCORE: 75%



Steve Hill might be a broken man but Reality Check will be back in the future.

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a striped shirt, is smiling and holding a computer mouse. In the background, a newspaper is visible with the headline "TELL-A-FRIEND" and the name "RICHARD HAGEN".

WEIN RAEB

TELL-A-FRIEND

YESTERDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

THE PCZONE A-LIST

◀ SHOOTERS ▶

MEDAL OF HONOR



It may have taken years but finally there's a shooter worthy of toppling *Half-Life*. Brilliant level design, surprisingly good AI, an unparalleled sense of atmosphere and intensity, not to mention beautifully scripted scenes. It's also the first game that Richie has finished three times in as many months, and the first FPS Rhianna has finished in her life, which gives you some indication of the game's worth.

PUB EA DEV 2015
PCZ ISSUE 112



HALF-LIFE: GENERATIONS

Unchallenged for three years, *Half-Life* redefined its genre with a cracking atmosphere and a compelling plot. It now comes bundled with the excellent Opposing Force add-on pack and the world's favourite mod, *Counter-Strike*.

PUB Vivendi DEV Valve Software
PCZ ISSUE 71



MAFIA

From the makers of *Hidden & Dangerous* and just as compelling, this is the game of every great gangster film ever made. Tense missions, superb atmosphere, great AI – it's a classic in every respect. Badabing!

PUB Take 2 DEV Illusion
PCZ ISSUE 119



JEDI KNIGHT II: JEDI OUTCAST

The first Star Wars game to be awarded a PC ZONE Classic award since the original *Jedi Knight* back in 1997. This is more than just a simple FPS, it's frustrating, rewarding and extremely good fun. A new hope has come.

PUB Activision DEV Raven
PCZ ISSUE 115



SOLDIER OF FORTUNE II

The bloodiest game in the world is back, but this time there's a brilliant game cowering beneath the carnage. Sublime AI is the chief culprit and if you can stomach the violence this is a must buy.

PUB Activision DEV Raven
PCZ ISSUE 118



ALIENS VS PREDATOR 2

If we rated games on atmosphere and tension AvP2 would've been the highest-scoring game ever. The multiplayer game and 3D engine brought the score down, but for scares nothing can touch this three-way fragfest.

PUB Vivendi DEV Monolith
PCZ ISSUE 110



MAX PAYNE

It's not big and it's not clever, but for style and content *Max Payne* receives top marks. The character animations and soon-to-be-copied-by-everyone Bullet Time mode are the real stars, it's just a shame it only lasts a few hours.

PUB Take 2 DEV Remedy
PCZ ISSUE 107



RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN

A mixed bag. Visually it might be at the top of the pile, but the single-player game has been completely eclipsed by *Medal Of Honor*. Forget that and head for the multiplayer action instead, where the game comes into its own.

PUB Activision DEV Gray Matter/Nerve
PCZ ISSUE 112



UNREAL TOURNAMENT

Unreal Tournament's multiplayer mode is more than a match for *Quake III*, with a combination of well-designed maps and diverse gameplay. Single-player mode is a tad short, but it's still more of a challenge than most.

PUB Infogrames DEV Epic/Digital Extremes
PCZ ISSUE 81



QUAKE III ARENA

Still going strong with a constant stream of mods and add-ons, *Quake III* is probably the best game for pure deathmatch multiplayer, but in terms of numbers it's trounced online by *Half-Life* and *Counter-Strike*.

PUB Activision DEV id
PCZ ISSUE 87

◀ STRATEGY ▶

MEDIEVAL: TOTAL WAR



NEW ENTRY Sequel to the stunning *Shogun: Total War* (now available at a budget price), *Medieval* offers everything its predecessor did and a whole lot more. Adding to the massive 3D battles and turn-based *Risk*-style strategy map are a multitude of new options, both political, diplomatic and military. Breathtaking in every way, strategy games simply don't come better than this.

PUB Activision
DEV Creative Assembly
PCZ ISSUE 120

WARRIOR KINGS

A visually stunning and hugely ambitious RTS that melds the strategic diversity of *Battle Realms* with the huge 3D rolling landscapes of *Shogun*. With a compelling story to boot, no strategy fan should be without a copy.

PUB MicroSoft DEV Black Cactus
PCZ ISSUE 114



COMMANDOS 2

There have been a few imitators of the squad-based strategy of *Commandos* but none have come close to this sequel. If, like us, you loved the first game, you'll love this massive, preposterously detailed follow-up even more.

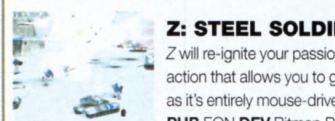
PUB Eidos DEV Pyro Studio
PCZ ISSUE 108



COSACKS: EUROPEAN WARS

There are 8,000 troops at your disposal in this historically accurate RTS. Smooth unit movement, a 3D landscape with real physics modelling and great graphics and sound make it truly absorbing. An essential purchase.

PUB CDV DEV GSC Gameworld
PCZ ISSUE 101



Z: STEEL SOLDIERS

Z will re-ignite your passion for strategy games with its fast-paced in-yr-face action that allows you to get down and dirty from the off. The AI is superb, and as it's entirely mouse-driven, it's simple and easy to get into.

PUB EON DEV Bitmap Brothers
PCZ ISSUE 101



ETHERLORDS

This unexpected gem might just be good enough to convert those who immediately associate 'turn-based' with the word 'geek'. The visuals and sound are stunning, the tactical variety truly staggering – fantastic stuff.

PUB JoWooD DEV Nival Interactive
PCZ ISSUE 112



WARCRAFT III

While not a huge departure from the original, *Warcraft III* is an extremely enjoyable and polished package. The storyline is brilliant and the multiplayer action dangerously addictive. Simple, solid entertainment.

PUB VU Games DEV Blizzard
PCZ ISSUE 119



BATTLE REALMS

Emerging from the quagmire of all too similar RTS games this is a genuinely ground-breaking strategy game. It does have its flaws which include a tedious plot, but the great use of sound, visuals and gameplay shine through.

PUB Ubi Soft DEV Liquid Entertainment
PCZ ISSUE 111



AOEII: GOLD EDITION

It might not be radically different from the original, but sometimes evolution is just as good as revolution. In *AOEII* the gameplay is honed to perfection with balanced units and strong single and multiplayer campaigns. A great RTS.

PUB Microsoft DEV Ensemble Studios
PCZ ISSUE 84



SUDDEN STRIKE

Sudden Strike mixes WWII action with classic RTS gameplay in order to create a compelling strategy title. Its large-scale battles, huge selection of units and superb interface make it a must for RTS fans.

PUB CDV DEV Fireglow
PCZ ISSUE 96

Welcome to the PC ZONE A-List, the definitive buyer's guide for all discerning PC gamers. The games that grace these pages aren't just good, they're the best of the best in their respective genres, and our list is continually updated to show how each game stands in relation to its peers. Get in.

◀ ROLE-PLAYING GAMES ▶

DEUS EX



Warren Spector is one of the true visionaries of the computer game medium, and this is his magnum opus. Combining the finer elements of *Half-Life*, *System Shock 2* and *Thief*, *Deus Ex* is an RPG of complex beauty and a true revolution in computer gaming. The fascinating sci-fi plot and amazing attention to detail, combined with unparalleled player freedom are just some of the reasons why *Deus Ex* is a landmark in gaming.

PUB Eidos DEV Ion Storm

PCZ ISSUE 93



THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND

One of the most impressive RPGs we've seen in years. A massively open-ended world full of beautiful visuals, superb depth of gameplay and innovative character development make this a classic that will keep you totally absorbed.

PUB Ubi Soft DEV Bethesda Softworks

PCZ ISSUE 117



NEVERWINTER NIGHTS

The makers of the epic *Baldur's Gate* series prove they are still a leading force in the world of RPGs with this glorious hardcore 3D adventure. It features great single and multiplayer options, along with a very accessible toolkit.

PUB Infogrames DEV Bioware

PCZ ISSUE 118



PLANECAPE: TORMENT

An incredible game from Black Isle, using the *Baldur's Gate* engine. With a compelling story, well-scripted dialogue and the best character development we've seen in any game of its kind, this is a dark, adult scorcher of an RPG.

PUB Interplay DEV Black Isle Studio

PCZ ISSUE 87



DUNGEON SIEGE

Graphically brilliant, massively enjoyable and highly immersive, *Dungeon Siege* is one of the best RPGs to date and only misses out on a Classic because of the shortcomings in the narrative.

PUB Microsoft DEV Gas Powered Games

PCZ ISSUE 115



SYSTEM SHOCK 2

Definitely one of the most original and disturbing games to hit the PC, *System Shock 2* manages to successfully mix the genres of role-playing, action and adventure into one. Play it with the lights off if you're hard enough.

PUB EA DEV Irrational Games

PCZ ISSUE 80



BALDUR'S GATE II

The original *Baldur's Gate* was hailed as one of the best story-driven role-playing games ever. The sequel isn't vastly different, but it's bigger, better and still extremely addictive. An essential for anyone interested in PC role-playing.

PUB Interplay DEV Bioware

PCZ ISSUE 96



THRONE OF DARKNESS

An enjoyable party-based strategic hack 'n' slash from the developers of *Diablo* sees you take command of seven samurai as they fight their way through feudal Japan. Not for everyone, granted, but worth a look.

PUB Vivendi DEV Click Entertainment

PCZ ISSUE 96



FREEDOM FORCE

Control your own group of superheroes in this immersive and fully destructible comic book world. It may not be the most sophisticated and bearded of RPGs, but *Freedom Force* is unadulterated bubble-gum fun at its best.

PUB EA DEV Irrational Games

PCZ ISSUE 115



DIABLO II

The sequel to the definitive hack 'n' slash took all the qualities of the original into a massive world of beautifully simplistic yet compelling gameplay. With a huge online community and an excellent expansion, *DII* is as addictive as ever.

PUB VU Games DEV Blizzard

PCZ ISSUE 84

◀ ACTION/ADVENTURE ▶

GRIM FANDANGO



If you've followed the successes of LucasArts from the early days of *Monkey Island*, *Sam & Max* and *Day Of The Tentacle*, this is a must-buy. The comic interaction between Manny and Glottis is a high watermark for scripting in games, while sublime graphics and laugh-out-loud humour ensure it's at the top of its genre. A word of warning though: it's bloody hard and if your mind doesn't work laterally you'll be playing it until the day you die.

PUB Activision DEV LucasArts

PCZ ISSUE 71



SOUL REAVER 2

While this latest episode in the saga of Raziel takes few risks with the action/adventure formula, it's a consummately constructed example of the genre, with a compelling storyline, satisfying combat and excellent puzzle dynamics.

PUB Eidos DEV Crystal Dynamics

PCZ ISSUE 111



DISCWORLD NOIR

Although the point-and-click adventure game is dying, *Discworld Noir* is still very much alive. It's darker in style than previous *Discworld* games and all the better for it in our opinion.

PUB Infogrames DEV Perfect Entertainment

PCZ ISSUE 79



SEVERANCE: BLADE OF DARKNESS

Anyone who doesn't mind being splattered with the kind of gore rarely seen outside *Soldier Of Fortune* will find much to like in *Severance*. But it stands out from the usual hack 'n' slasher with its amazing engine and combo system.

PUB Codemasters DEV Rebel Act Studios

PCZ ISSUE 98



THE NOMAD SOUL

Distinctly odd, but original nonetheless, *The Nomad Soul* is a huge intricate world populated by lap dancers and David Bowie. At turns adventure, beat 'em up and platformer, it's insanely ambitious and almost pulls it off.

PUB Eidos DEV Quantic Dream

PCZ ISSUE 83



HITMAN: CODENAME 47

Reminiscent of *Leon* and *Day Of The Jackal*, *Hitman* recreates the dubious thrill of carrying out a contract killing. Snipe from rooftops, disguise yourself in your victims' uniforms and walk away from explosions with calm elegance.

PUB Eidos DEV IO Interactive

PCZ ISSUE 98



PROJECT EDEN

Giving you control of four variously skilled operatives in a nightmarish future metropolis, *Eden* is at once predictable and innovative. The combat and AI may be dull, but the varied puzzles and raft of cool gadgetry make up for it.

PUB Eidos DEV Core Design

PCZ ISSUE 107



INDIANA JONES AND THE INFERNAL MACHINE

LucasArts moves away from the point-and-click genre and into *Tomb Raider* territory for its latest Indy game, but with many of the adventure elements still in place. The result is surprisingly good, but not for traditionalists.

PUB Activision DEV LucasArts

PCZ ISSUE 84



ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND

One of the hardest things to do in a game is to make your audience laugh with you rather than at you, and *Escape From Monkey Island* is undoubtedly one of the most genuinely funny games to come out in recent years.

PUB Activision DEV LucasArts

PCZ ISSUE 98



METAL GEAR SOLID

Although it's been ported pretty much identically from the console version (with a few graphical improvements), *MGS*'s tense gameplay, well-designed levels and variety of challenging bosses make it a thing of beauty.

PUB Microsoft DEV Konami

PCZ ISSUE 96

◀ GOD GAMES

▶

BLACK & WHITE

Although it had its critics we still stand by our original verdict. Peter Molyneux's vision is pure and the design of the game both breaks boundaries and serves as a blueprint for the future. The add-on *Creature Isle* is also available, which cuts down on micro-management and lets you guide your creature through a variety of mini-games. Overall we think it's pure genius in a box.

PUB EA DEV Lionhead Studios
PCZ ISSUE 100

**CIVILIZATION III**

Civilization III sticks to the same compulsive gameplay that made the first two games so popular. Die-hard Civ fans will relish the improved visuals and animation, while the new user-friendly interface makes the game accessible to the first-timer. Brings to mind the maxim 'if it ain't broke...'.

PUB Infogrames DEV Firaxis Games
PCZ ISSUE 111

**THE SIMS**

Revolutionary at birth, the concept has since been diluted through numerous add-ons and an unhealthily long stay in the charts. It's now little more than a cash cow for Electronic Arts, but you can't help but admire the strength of community and the fact that it's still selling by the bucketload.

PUB EA DEV Maxis/EA
PCZ ISSUE 87

**CAESAR III**

Starting from scratch, you've got to build a majestic Roman city and ensure a harmonious life for your citizens by balancing their work, health and entertainment needs. So what? So it's probably one of the most utterly absorbing and addictive god sims in existence. Hail Caesar.

PUB VU Games DEV Impressions
PCZ ISSUE 70

**SIMCITY 3000**

Ten years on, the offspring of the original building game *SimCity* still remains as addictive as it ever was. Little was broken, and little was fixed. With new buildings and an enhanced transport system, *SimCity 3000* is a must for old-timers and new addicts alike.

PUB EA DEV Maxis
PCZ ISSUE 74

**ZEUS: MASTER OF OLYMPUS**

Straight from the creators of *Pharaoh* and *Caesar III* comes this intricate yet hugely playable micro-management god game. Despite its slightly cartoonish look Zeus is highly addictive, but suffers slightly from its lack of multiplayer options and an undeveloped combat system.

PUB VU Games DEV Impressions Games
PCZ ISSUE 97

**ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON**

Design and build your own theme park and then pack it full of the most fiendish rides your imagination can conjure up, while trying to keep the cash and the punters coming in. From rickety wooden dippers to *Nemesis*-style, white-knuckle burners, *RollerCoaster Tycoon* is hugely addictive. Be warned.

PUB Infogrames DEV Chris Sawyer
PCZ ISSUE 75

**MONOPOLY TYCOON**

This mixture of the classic board game and a *Theme Park/SimCity*-style building sim is an admirable attempt at something a little different. Played in real-time, the aim is to make as much money as possible. Great fun for a while, but it quickly becomes repetitive.

PUB Infogrames DEV Deep Red
PCZ ISSUE 110

**DUNGEON KEEPER 2**

The ultimate 'it's good to be bad' game, *Dungeon Keeper* was a great idea and *DK2* takes the essence and humour of the original, corrects all the mistakes, vastly improves the graphics, and adds a myriad of new features that build wisely on the original concept.

PUB EA DEV Bullfrog
PCZ ISSUE 79

**CALL TO POWER II**

It might not have the official endorsement, but *Call To Power II* is a spiritual successor to one of the greatest strategy games of all time, *Civilization II*. The gameplay is familiar but every element has been polished and the result is a hugely challenging and rewarding experience. It's still well worth seeking out.

PUB Activision DEV Activision
PCZ ISSUE 98

◀ SPORT

▶

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER: 01/02

Another year, another update and yet another improvement on the greatest sports management game of all time, one that will literally consume your life. New features this time around include masked attributes (forcing you to scout for talent), updated team and player stats, and all of the new rules and regulations imposed by FIFA for the new season. Pure genius.

PUB Eidos DEV Sports Interactive

PCZ ISSUE 108

VIRTUA TENNIS

Who would have believed that this console favourite would translate so well to the PC? Its control interface is supremely intuitive, while the AI is massively challenging. Best of all, though, are its truly sublime multiplayer options.

PUB Empire Interactive DEV Rowan Software

PCZ ISSUE 114

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3

This 3rd edition of Tony Hawk's classic skateboarding game is an absolute joy to play. It features enormous levels, even more interaction and a totally kick-ass soundtrack.

PUB Activision DEV Neversoft Entertainment

PCZ ISSUE 98

VIRTUAL POOL 3

Easily the best cue-based game around, *VP3* features some near perfect physics and excellent graphics. The career and multiplayer modes are highly entertaining, and a superb tutorial will have you clearing up in no time.

PUB Interplay DEV Celeris

PCZ ISSUE 99

FIFA 2002

Still the best PC football game despite some irksome flaws, this graphically improved update introduces nuances such as through-ball and one-two options, which provide greater variation but less passing accuracy.

PUB Electronic Arts DEV EA Sports

PCZ ISSUE 110

◀ MULTIPLAYER MODS ▶

DAY OF DEFEAT

Day Of Defeat is one multiplayer mod that has gone from strength to strength with every incarnation. The brilliant level design and atmospheric detail have made sure that it's currently being played online by more people than both *Medal Of Honor* and *Return To Castle Wolfenstein*. The only difference is that *DOD* is completely free! The most recent version (3.0) is even better than ever and with more maps and respawning options, it's still the best WWII multiplayer mod around.

WEB www.dayofdefeatmod.com

PCZ120

COUNTER-STRIKE

Counter-Strike is getting a bit long in the tooth. It's still the most famous mod in the world, and proof that bedroom coding is in better health than ever.

WEB www.counter-strike.net

PCZ ISSUE 109

TEAM FORTRESS CLASSIC

A great *Half-Life* squad-based action game with nine classes, a wide variety of weaponry and many map variations. The action focuses on infiltrating enemy bases, and the frantic gameplay requires more manual dexterity than most.

WEB www.planethalf-life.com/tfc

PCZ ISSUE 94

STRIKE FORCE

Hot on the heels of *Counter-Strike* comes this superb total conversion mod for *Unreal Tournament*. It boasts outstanding maps and attention to detail, including heartbeat monitors that measure stress and infrared laser dot aiming.

WEB www.strikeforcecenter.com

PCZ ISSUE 109

JAILBREAK: POW

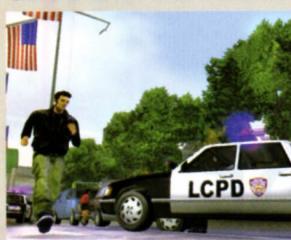
Two sides, two jails and a lot of fun. If you get fragged you get jailed and you have to stay until you're released. When all the team is in jail you get executed. All-in-all, one of the best *Quake III* mods available.

WEB www.planetquake.com/bkp

PCZ ISSUE 109

DRIVING GAMES ▶

GRAND THEFT AUTO III



It may have taken its time getting onto the PC, but *Grand Theft Auto III* was definitely worth the wait. Offering you both traditional linear missions and a wonderfully freeform world ripe for exploring, the game boasts stunning graphics and superb attention to detail. It's a great spin on both the driving and shooting genres and we can assure you that you'll love this noisy orgy of violence and speed. Crime really does pay.

PUB Take 2 DEV Rockstar

PCZ ISSUE 117



GRAND PRIX 4

You won't find a more accurate racing sim. Graphically lush and full of anal detail, Geoff Cramond's latest effort offers in-depth telemetry and a staggering number of options. *Grand Prix 4* is leading the grid in the world of racing sims.

PUB Infogrames DEV Simergy

PCZ ISSUE 119



COLIN MCRAE 2.0

This is still the benchmark rally title and looks set to remain so until *Colin McRae 3.0* appears. The graphics are fantastic, the detail is overwhelming and the cards handle beautifully. So if you are on the look-out for the definitive rally game, this is it.

PUB Codemasters DEV Codemasters

PCZ ISSUE 110



CRAZY TAXI

One of the best arcade conversions to the PC that we've seen for a long time. *Crazy Taxi* is a bright, colourful and in-yer-face driving experience that's built on solid arcade values and good old fashioned insanity.

PUB Empire Interactive DEV Hitmaker/Strangeline

PCZ ISSUE 119



MIDTOWN MADNESS 2

Buckle up for some high-speed action as you race around London and San Francisco. The original *MM* was a belter, but with improved cars, races and controls, this is even better. We reckon it's the definitive arcade racer.

PUB Microsoft DEV Angel Studios

PCZ ISSUE 96

3D ACTION / STRATEGY ▶

OPERATION FLASHPOINT GOLD



Now available with the tricky Red Hammer add-on, *Flashpoint* has become to tactical action what *Half-Life* was to shooters. Fight on foot or in tanks, fly planes or even direct an entire platoon, this game is total war – in your face and on a massive scale. The graphics are an acquired taste, but they convey a sense of wide-open warfare perfectly. It's the ultimate military simulation, with a stunning atmosphere and superb missions.

PUB Codemasters DEV Bohemia Interactive

PCZ ISSUE 104



GHOST RECON

A superb squad-based shooter, which masterfully combines tactics and action. The levels range from wide-open landscapes to claustrophobic city streets, in what is a stunning evocation of special forces warfare.

PUB Ubi Soft DEV Red Storm Entertainment

PCZ ISSUE 110



HIDDEN & DANGEROUS

Looking old and with most of the original bugs intact, *Hidden & Dangerous* is still a great WWII game featuring some incredibly varied levels and a stirring soundtrack. Look out for the supposedly bug-free Deluxe release next issue.

PUB Take 2 DEV Illusion Softworks

PCZ ISSUE 79



HOSTILE WATERS

A brilliant RTS/action game you can play purely strategically or up close and personal. Inspired by the 16-bit classic *Carrier Command*, it's just a shame there aren't any multiplayer options.

PUB Rage DEV Rage Software

PCZ ISSUE 101



GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO

This mammoth and original 3D action/strategy game includes RTS, RPG, real-time and third-person shooter combat elements. It's also rather funny and features near-naked women with blue skin.

PUB Interplay DEV Planet Moon Studios

PCZ ISSUE 95

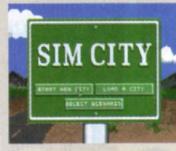
ALL-TIME CLASSICS ▶

DEVELOPER AT ID STUDIOS GRAEME DEVINE GIVES PC ZONE HIS PERSONAL PICK OF THE GAMING ELITE



WARCRAFT II (PC)

Whenever it was time to play this game at the office, someone would play the wavfile 'ready to work' or 'zug zug' over the intercom and everyone would hop on. I have many fond memories of playing epic battles for hours and hours with this game. Makes me come over all teary-eyed just thinking about it.



SIMCITY (AMIGA)

This game came into the office at about two o'clock in the afternoon. By eight in the evening I had the Amiga 1000 packed into the boot of my car and was heading home to play it there some more. I've never packed a computer up and taken it home for any game before or since – which just about says it all really.



DUNGEON KEEPER (PC)

The idea of being evil comes with some difficulty for me. But right from the first dungeon I was smacking my guys to work harder, and do more. The sequel had me hooked as well – I'd be playing all night when the game voice would remind me that it was four in the morning and time to go to sleep (I swear it did!).



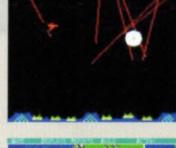
ASTEROIDS (ARCADE)

Bit of an oldie this one, but probably quite important in terms of how I turned out. This is the game that I ignored girls, booze, and rock 'n' roll for, so it probably directly led to me being in the game business. The heartbeat that thumped out of the arcade machine as the pieces got smaller and moved faster always seemed to match my own.



FINAL FANTASY X (PS2)

Yeah, like the other gazillion people who got into this game I was hooked. It's one of the few games where I cared about the characters and what happened to them. It's also the first game that my daughter really liked playing with me, another reason I've got a soft spot for it. She was always telling me: "Use your red dragon daddy!"



MISSILE COMMAND (ATARI)

I think I was actually contracting for Atari when this action-packed little game came out, but I remember it all. The 34 variations (ha, how often do we do that anymore?) and the endless attack of ICBM missiles with a chilling message about the state of the world. It's actually a kinda weird premise for a game now I think back on it, but it was very addictive.



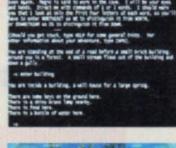
RAILROAD TYCOON (PC)

I don't know why I became so addicted to this game, but I remember sitting upstairs on my new 286 computer playing this thing for hours and hours. In the end, I was a terrible player, but had so much fun playing it that it didn't really matter. This one is probably an even weirder premise for a game than *Missile Command*, but I was really obsessed with it.



MARIO 64 (N64)

I remember my daughter was pretty young when this came out, and so we'd play to get a star or two every day before she went to bed. After a few weeks of this, it was becoming harder and harder for me to get a star, so she was getting to stay up longer and longer. That's what I remember when I think about this game. And the fact that I really liked it at the time.



ADVENTURE (DEC VAX)

This is probably one of the first games I played. I used to go to my Dad's office every Saturday and just spend hours delving further and deeper in. You'd be typing your way through this world, but the whole thing seemed so real. I remember printing out the day's events, and then I'd take that stuff home and try to make the game on my TRS-80.



WIPEOUT (PSX)

Probably the best racing game ever. There was a one-track demo that came with the original PSX – it took forever to load, but load it we did, over and over and over again! When the game came out and it allowed for two PlayStation systems to be hooked up together, we had another TV in the office in no time at all!

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WHATEVER TURNS YOU ON



megastores

RETRO ZONE

ANOTHER DOSE OF GAMING NOSTALGIA

"Despite the complicated dynamics the idea was simple – build a city and keep its citizens safe and happy"



Man has always found it much easier to destroy than to create.

SIMCITY

The late '80s may have been a golden age for platform games and adventures, but for strategy gamers it was positively Neolithic

RELEASED originally for Commodore Amiga and Apple Mac in February '89, *SimCity* finally arrived on PC as the decade fashion forgot drew to a close. It not only offered an escape from the hardcore military themes most strategy developers seemed to be obsessed with, but also a real-time environment that was fun to explore, easy to get lost in and difficult to escape from.

Despite the complicated dynamics the idea was hideously simple – build a city and keep its citizens safe and happy. Keep building, keep keeping people happy, etc, etc. As with most things, however, it came down to money. Run out of it and not only would your new developments grind to a halt, your city would fall into decay; crime would overrun your slice of virtual utopia and,

in a fit of frustration and with nowhere else to turn, a bloody great lizard would appear and eat the citizens that remained. Even the most successful town planners, having led their teeming metropolis into the 21st century, wouldn't be averse to inviting aliens to dinner just to liven up the proceedings.

Not that *SimCity* was a dull game you understand, it's just that it lacked

RETRO ZONE DECEMBER 1989

In 1989 Richie Shoemaker was failing his A-levels, dying his hair black and singing in a band called *The Winter Mixtures*. It's been downhill ever since

direction. As have all the subsequent sequels and the countless number of Sim spin-offs. Need we mention the brave *SimCopter*, the abominable *Streets Of SimCity* – a real contender for the worst game ever made if ever there was one – and of course the virtual soap opera that is *The Sims*. Thank you *SimCity*. Thank you very much.



You can play the original game free of charge at <http://simcity.ea.com>.



SimCity: a self-perpetuating exercise in the futility of human existence.

THE BEST OF THE REST



CHASE HQ

(Amiga/Atari ST)
Another coin-op conversion from the masters of the time Ocean Software, this was a hit race 'n' chase game where you had to catch up with a wanted criminal and ram them off the road, a kind of *Outrun* meets *Spy Hunter*. Notable at the time for its over-generous use of sampled sounds, the game was a simplistic affair where even the criminals were sign-posted.

INDIANAPOLIS 500

(PC)
While the PC had been chugging along quite happily with the odd episode of *Ultima* or *Kings Quest*, it was never really a serious contender against the 16-bit home computers and consoles. *Indy 500*, with its Roland soundboard-enhanced sound and 386-ninja 3D graphics helped change all that. Not by much, but it was one of the first decent attempts at racing simulation.



THE HOUND OF SHADOW

(Amiga/Atari ST)
A bit of a favourite of mine and notable for being one of the few text-based adventures I ever managed to get into seriously. The sepia graphics complemented the creepy HP Lovecraft setting perfectly, and the RPG character creation was a real innovation. Well scripted throughout, it remains one of the best 'serious' adventure games, not to mention one of the most disturbing.



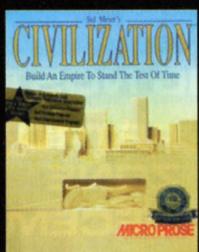
OPERATION THUNDERBOLT

(Amiga/ST/Spectrum/Amstrad/C64)
The twin-Uzi sequel to the popular lightgun games arrived on home computers, courtesy of who else but Ocean. Unlike many conversions this one was a cracker, especially on Amiga and ST, with almost full sound and speech. Of course, most of us had to make do with our mice rather than plastic sub-machine guns, but it was a small price to pay.

NEWS

GAMING NEWS FROM MARCH 1994

- Codemasters release a CD crammed with 30 games for the ZX Spectrum, which means the games can be loaded in seconds rather than minutes.
- Top of the PC games chart this month; the venerable chess game, *Chessmaster 2100*. We're now up to version 9000. Selling steadily on Amiga and ST was *Laser Squad* – a game that doesn't seem to know when to give up.
- Creative Labs releases the SoundBlaster card, which features an 11-voice synthesiser, text-to-speech, digitised voice, input/output and a joystick port. Today Creative claims 100 million people have SoundBlaster cards installed.



GAMES THAT CHANGED THE WORLD SID MEIER'S CIVILIZATION

For apparently no reason whatsoever a strange little game about ancient civilisations arrived from nowhere and changed the entire strategy genre forever. Keith Pullin investigates how Genghis Khan, Gandhi, Napoleon and Elizabeth I started a revolution

GAME Sid Meier's Civilization

DEVELOPER Microprose

RELEASED 1991

INFLUENCED Probably the entire RTS genre and a fair number of god games too



You could play Civ on both randomly generated or real world maps.



However, this did not involve rolling up a trouser leg and baring one nipple.

IF, BY definition, a game that changed the world is a game that kept you glued to your computer for six months, then *Sid Meier's Civilization* is one such game. The irony of course is that you, personally, probably did very little to change the world in that time.

Hunched over your computer in your sweaty little boxroom, planet Earth hurtled through the cosmos without you, and you were reduced to being a mere spectator in the game of life. But it didn't matter, because with *Civilization* there was another world you were a part of, the one right there on your monitor – the world you created.

HISTORY IS FUN

Civ allowed us to recreate this miserable rock of ours as it should have been. It also helped us see the world from a

different perspective. For the first time ever we could imagine a world where the Roman Empire prospered and did not die in a blaze of hedonistic self-destruction. We could marvel at a world where the Babylonians didn't blow their own minds to pieces with weird science and revel in an age where Queen Elizabeth I was the omnipotent mistress.

Civ was history as it should have been taught. Imagine Sid Meier walking into your classroom in 1991, whacking a CD into the computer and saying: "Right kids, get your

mice out, today's ancient Greece!" Forget Jennifer Brown behind the bike sheds at lunchtime – it's time for extra history.

In fact, when you think about it, it's hard to believe the concept of *Civilization* was ever seriously considered, let alone worshipped for years to come. You just couldn't imagine the idea would appeal to anyone but the most anal historian... or

Sid Meier. Ancient civilisations? Diplomacy? Economics? Irrigation? As a cure for insomnia it sounds perfect, but as a game? Well, it didn't exactly fit snugly into your usual gaming categories. And on top of everything it was turn-based! What the hell was Meier thinking of? He couldn't have picked a less action-packed style of gaming if he'd tried. With such dour subject matter, not to mention the limited, uninspiring and downright

PROFILE

Sid Meier co-founded Microprose in 1982 and has more hits to his name than Mick Jagger. In 1997 he founded a new company, Firaxis, and has just finished his latest game, *Sid Meier's SimGolf*. How good does that sound?

NAME Sid Meier

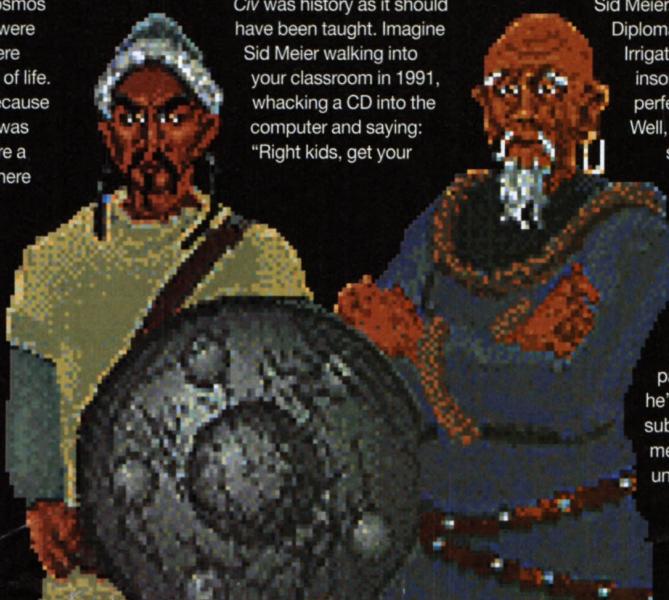
FIRST GAME

SpitFire Ace

ROLE ON CIVILIZATION

Designer and coder

NOW DOING His head in trying to make PC golf cool. Oh, and there's *Civ III: Play The World* of course



boring turn-based interface – the fact that *Civilization* actually became one of the greatest games of all time is truly some kind of miracle.

Some classic games like *Doom* and *Speedball 2* just sound great. There's no getting away from the fact that they were born to change the world. The mere idea of futuristic violence is an out-and-out winner. But *Civ*? The reasons for its greatness are altogether more mysterious.

So, how does the inspiration for a game like *Civ* come about? Is it something you mull over while browsing through an encyclopedia of ancient history or does it suddenly hit you, Peter Molyneux-style, in a kind of divine 'vision' in the middle of a cold January night?

"My ongoing interest in history and *SimCity* inspired *Civilization* in a way," recalls Meier. "The first prototype of *Civilization* that I did was a real-time game like *SimCity*, in that you placed cities and moved things around, but cities grew without you. You basically seeded the world in a kind of *SimCity*-esque way. Instead of zoning, you seeded things. You said I want a city over there, and why don't you do some farming over here? What I didn't like in that version was that you did a lot more watching than you did playing."

It was at that point that Meier added the final magical components: "*SimCity*, *Empire*, *Railroad Tycoon*, and the

Civilization board game were the different ingredients that we stirred together to get to *Civilization*."

SLEEP FOR A THOUSAND YEARS

Like all great games, the real draw of *Civilization* was its gameplay. You could restart the game time and time again, and each time you'd find yourself with a different landscape, a different neighbour and different set of circumstances. But despite its non-linearity, *Civ* was never short of goals.

Sid Meier's ability to keep the gameplay not only entertaining, but fully focused on making your civilisation as

powerful as possible while simultaneously juggling so many potentially hardcore economical and military issues was stunning. But with such potentially complex subject matter it wasn't all plain sailing during the game's development.

"Making *Civ* was incredibly challenging, I actually hit a wall part-way through," recalls Meier. "I was trying different things and the game wasn't coming together the way I had wanted, so I decided to put it on the back shelf and work on another game for a while. Once that game was completed I revisited *Civ* with some fresh ideas and made the game I was envisioning."



With the world at your fingertips you could rewrite history.

Civ was never completely a one-man show though. Bruce Shelley also happened to devote a large portion of his life to the project, a fact that Meier is quick to acknowledge: "Bruce and I are good friends and have always enjoyed working together. We have a mutual respect for each other's work, which fuelled some collaborations that were a lot of fun."

Despite the incredible amount of time spent working on *Civ*, Meier is refreshingly honest about how he felt during that time: "Honestly, making games has never really felt like 'work' to me. It's what I love to do, so putting in long hours (which is inherent when you're making any game) isn't such a bad thing."

Civ was also one of those old-style games that was a labour of love rather than a means to keep the wolf from the door. Subsequently Meier had the freedom to work wherever he liked: "I worked from home, but mostly in the office at Microprose. It was a large amount of work, but slightly different from the work involved in making games today. Today the game-making process is much more complicated because of all of the different people involved in taking a game from concept to store shelves."

NOTHING CHANGES

The amazing thing is when you go back and play *Civ* now it's surprising how similar it is to its contemporary offspring. Regardless of the huge amounts of people involved, the ongoing *Civilization* series has remained largely faithful in most respects to that first pioneering game – essentially it's only the graphics that have undergone major plastic surgery in the last 11 years.

One of the main reasons for this is that Meier has remained active in all of the subsequent sequels. OK, so he may not have been in at the deep end slaving away in his bedroom on the actual code, but he's always made sure he was around to offer pearls of design wisdom when it's been needed.

The main bulk of the work on the sequels has in fact fallen to a man named Jeff Briggs. Starting with *Colonization* in 1994, Briggs has also guided *Civ II* (1996) and *Civ III* (2001) safely home.

Even *Civilization: Call To Power*, Activision's bastard offspring was still a relatively playable game (if you ignore the bugs), even if it had nothing to do with Meier at all, and only came about due to a slight licensing loophole in the late '90s. The fact remains though – *Call To Power* was inspired by Sid's original idea. Curiously Meier himself doesn't have too

"My ongoing interest in history and *SimCity* inspired *Civilization*"

SID MEIER

DEVELOPER AND CODER, CIVILIZATION





"Making games has never felt like 'work' to me. It's what I love to do"

SID MEIER
DEVELOPER AND CODER,
CIVILIZATION

imagined that 11 years later people would still be playing Civ and wanting more!"

And play it they do. The multiplayer version is now proving to be rather popular online and on LANs around the world. Is this something Meier is surprised about? After all, Civ's gameplay is relatively ponderous and thoughtful – qualities that traditionally don't translate into classic multiplayer experiences. "In the past I've mostly enjoyed playing Civ as a single player, but lately I've been having great fun playing the very cool multiplayer games for Civ III. As you can imagine, we have quite a few veteran Civ players at Firaxis, so it's really challenging and fiercely competitive. I'm constantly amazed at the unique strategies the guys here use to win... it makes for some intense play sessions!"



Take the world from beads on a string to advanced mathematics.

AN INFLUENTIAL MAN

One of the side effects of making such a successful game is that people inevitably try and copy it. In the case of Activision and *Call To Power* absolutely no effort is made to hide it. In fact, every effort is made to ensure that people are under the illusion that said game is part of the great Meier dynasty.

Other developers though are subtler with their 'flattery'. There is an argument to suggest that if it hadn't been for Civ the whole real-time strategy genre would never have existed. Civ was, after all, the first game to feature resources: coal, oil, gems, furs, the list goes on and on...

These were all highly important aspects of gameplay; you'll be lucky to come across an RTS nowadays that doesn't have you running around foraging for similar resources. Advancing technology and tech trees is another area that modern RTSs simply cannot avoid. Creating units to attack and defend cities is another. The similarities are endless. If *Dune 2* or *Command & Conquer* claim to be the forebearers of the modern RTS, they in

much to say on the subject, and when pressed about his feelings on *Call To Power* will give away nothing more than: "It's an OK game."

Anyway, bastard aside, the way we can pick up and play the earlier games

of the series as if they were brand new is testament to the strength of gameplay of

the original. *Civilization III* is Civ with frills.

Even though Meier suspected *Civilization* might cause a few ripples, he never anticipated that the game would ultimately affect the industry in the phenomenal way it did: "I knew we had made something really special, but I had no idea *Civilization* would be as popular as it is. I never

THE FUTURE OF CIVILIZATION IS IN YOUR HANDS



Even in its third outing the Civ magic was still there.



Civ III featured a major graphics overhaul.

THE WORLD IN YOUR PC...

So, where does *Civilization* go from here? Will the more world-weary and cynical PC market eventually catch up with Sid and his everlasting gobstopper? Or do Mr Meier and the boys at Firaxis feel they can keep the current winning formula intact?

"We put all of the latest and greatest ideas for Civ into Civ III and the soon-to-be-released Civ III: Play The World," beams Sid. "If players want more though – we'll look at giving them more. I think as the industry grows there will always be new ideas on how to make Civ even more fun... And we're happy to keep making the game!"

Yet it's difficult to see where exactly *Civilization* can go. The challenge of making a more immediate, action-packed multiplayer version might be tempting for Firaxis. Other than that, you can only see future versions being further graphical enhancements. The gameplay has barely changed over the last 11 years, and of course it doesn't have to; it's never been broken and it's never needed fixing. If fundamental changes and additions are to take place, they most certainly will have to be weighed up against the current gameplay to ensure it doesn't detract from what's already near perfect.



When Genghis came knocking at your door you knew that war wasn't far away.

turn owe a huge debt of gratitude to Civ.

The god game is another genre that's difficult to separate from the all-encompassing influence of Civ. Strictly speaking the original *Populous* was the true pioneer of the genre, Civ along with

SimCity can certainly be credited with helping the god game find its niche. Would empire-building games such as *Zeus* and *Pharaoh* have appeared if it weren't for Civ? Even, yawn, economy simulations like *Capitalisation* drew on Civ's unearthly ability to get people interested in subjects they had no right to be interested in. True, *Capitalisation* never really pulled it off, but the fact remains, Civ allowed developers to see that if it's

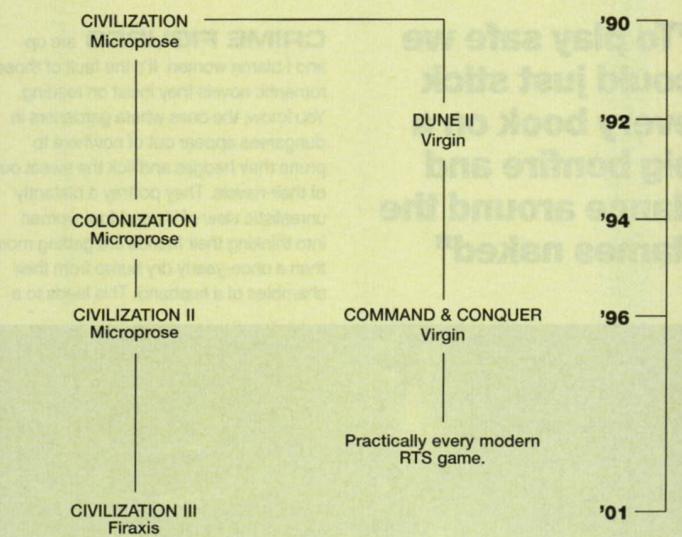


"I never imagined that 11 years later people would still be playing Civ"

SID MEIER
DEVELOPER AND CODER, CIVILIZATION

HOW GAMES BECAME CIVILISED...

EXACTLY WHICH GAMES CIVILIZATION HAS INFLUENCED IS OPEN TO DEBATE. STRONG EVIDENCE SUGGESTS THAT CIV WAS ACTUALLY THE CATALYST FOR THE WHOLE RTS GENRE. YOU MAY OR MAY NOT AGREE



done properly, with due consideration for the often neglected component of gameplay, any topic can be made into a successful game.

There can be no doubt that stuffy, boring old *Civilization* influenced more games than people care to admit. "There are lots of games that have borrowed ideas from Civ, just as I have borrowed ideas from other great games," states Meier. "I think that's a great thing in our industry... As long as you add some new ideas to your game, borrowing other things that have worked in the past makes sense. I like playing other games and finding similarities to games I've made... I take it as a compliment."

There's no shortage of games where Meier can take solace in the fact there's a little bit of him in there. Needless to say, Meier and



Every great ruler needs to sit back and marvel at their great Empire.

Civilization are without doubt one of the most inspirational and influential forces in the games industry. When Meier puts his name to something you have to sit up and take notice, even if it's a game about the American Civil War, or dare we say it, a game about creating a golf course. Even if it sounds as though the game has to be dull, as we've witnessed with Civ, some people can make magic out of seemingly mundane and obscure topics – and in Meier we have the ultimate magician. **PCZ**

BRUCE'S GENERATION GAME

IN CASE YOU WERE WONDERING WHAT BRUCE SHELLEY DID AFTER CIVILIZATION...



Bruce Shelley, the other half of the *Civilization* dynamic duo, is now the senior game designer of award-winning developer Ensemble Studios. Of course, this could explain why the *Age Of Empires* series is so damned good – you don't help create one of the greatest games of all time and not learn something in the process. Makes sense though, doesn't it? *Age Of Empires* has all of the same classic elements of *Civilization*: the different cultures, the clever economics, the resources and the slowly

improving technology tree. So, don't underestimate the part Bruce Shelley played in the birth of *Civilization*: his CV speaks for itself.



COMMENT

Think of a subject, any subject, as long as you don't know anything about it and then preach. Dave Woods is learning fast

"To play safe we could just stick every book on a big bonfire and dance around the flames naked"



Erm! Has one read any worthwhile books lately?

CRIME FIGURES are up and I blame women. It's the fault of those romantic novels they insist on reading. You know, the ones where gardeners in dungarees appear out of nowhere to prune their hedges and lick the sweat out of their navels. They portray a blatantly unrealistic view of life and fool women into thinking their friends are getting more than a once-yearly dry hump from their shambles of a husband. This leads to a

build-up of tension, which erupts over Kilroy at about 10.00am, and ends on the streets in bloody tragedy.

Of course, I could be wrong. I don't know anything about crime or Mills & Boon but I don't see why that should stop me. Everyone else seems to be qualified to make sweeping statements about things they know absolutely nothing about, like the procession of no-name celebs, royal dignitaries, headline-seeking MPs, outraged parents and hypocritical redtops that insist on putting the ills of the world at the door of the evil gamer.

Let's start at the top. Prince Charles stated: "One of the great battles we face today is to persuade our children away from computer games towards what can only be described as worthwhile books." The fact that he was telling this to his prize-winning Clerodendrum doesn't make me any happier that he's going to be King. And then you get Colonel David Grossman, a scary man who barks at every opportunity about how games teach kids to kill, by giving them the "will and the skill." Well sorry, Colonel, but I've played games for more than 20 years now, I specialise in first-person shooters, and when I went to a firing range in the States I was a) rubbish and b) petrified.

But at least Colonel Grossman lives in the real world. Do you remember the fantastically surreal article in the *Daily Mail* that suggested *Microsoft Flight Sim* might be to blame for September 11th? The crass and sensationalist article suggested that anyone who played the game could in fact steer a passenger jet plane into a specified building. The tits.

But they keep coming... How about German Conservative MP Edmund Stoiber who called for games to be banned in the aftermath of a tragic bloodbath in his country, while ignoring the fact that Germany is rammed full of licensed guns available to anyone who can sign on a dotted line? Or Labour MP Louise Ellman who was quoted as saying, "*Day Of Defeat*, and games like it, are a matter of grave concern, part of a trend to make Nazism acceptable." Now, Louise, have you played the game? Or did you just make that up because you wanted to see your name in the papers?

The latest is the soon-to-be Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, who actually made the most sense by pointing out that computer games are making consumers of kids. Shame he didn't widen his net to bag *Harry Potter* as well. Hell, to play safe we could just stick every book on a big bonfire and dance around the flames naked.

But enough is enough. I've decided it's got to stop, and I'm putting out a call to Margaret Thatcher, Whacko Jacko and David Icke, three people who just love to talk sense. Here's an open invitation for you to spout-off against computer games in this very space. If you're stuck I can give you a leg-up: just say something about how first-person shooters are actually commies/nasty grown-up people/lizards (delete as applicable) sent down to make us wear long black trenchcoats and exact bloody revenge on our headmasters. That should help put things in perspective. PW

COMING NEXT ISSUE...

WORLD EXCLUSIVE REVIEW AND DEMO NO ONE LIVES FOREVER 2

Cate Archer's back and there was only one magazine she wanted to premiere in. Unfortunately Hugh Heffner wasn't interested so she called her trusty back-up and as we find it hard to say no to a sexy lady, next month's *ZONE* is going to sport the world's first review and the exclusive single and multiplayer demos for Monolith's brand new shooter. Don't say we didn't warn you...

IN THE MAG

UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2003 • SPLINTER CELL • RAINBOW SIX: RAVENSHIELD • CENSORSHIP AROUND THE WORLD

ON THE DISCS

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- PS2 game of the year
- Xbox game of the year
- GameCube game of the year
- Handheld game of the year
- Online game of the year
- British developer of the year
- Publisher of the year (**Sponsored by Macrovision**)
- Hardware of the year (**Sponsored by Universal Interactive Studio**)
- Game innovation of the year (**PC**)
- Game innovation of the year (**console**)
- Most wanted game of Christmas 2002
- Retailer of the year (**Sponsored by EA Games**)

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